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Globalization and Slow Violence: Slow Genocide at the Periphery in Jeannette Armstrong's  
*Whispering in Shadows* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*

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*Whispering in Shadows* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*

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For

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## Abstract

The work that follows analyses the environmental, cultural, economic and rhetorical methods of conceptualizing violence affecting traditional Niger-Deltan and pan-Indigenous peoples. *Whispering in Shadows* by Jeanette Armstrong and *Yellow-Yellow* by Kaine Agary represent how Okanagan and other pan-Indigenous peoples of the Americas and Niger Deltans experience contemporary forms of slow genocide as a result of environmental pollution and various forms of displacement from ancestral spaces. This analysis of both texts brings to the fore the Indigenous sense of life, well-being, and progress that is grounded in a holistic view of communal life on traditional lands, and places it in contrast with the non-traditional use of traditional lands, as well as the exploitation of Okanagan and Nigerian Indigenous peoples produced by the dominant socio-economic realities controlled by the forces of globalization.

Indigenous environmentalism reflected by Armstrong's and Agary's novels views human relationships with the land in terms of an interconnected familial dependence, and not within extreme notions of romanticized abstinence from dependence on land or of capitalist exploitative use of land. In the light of the environmental criticism of *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows*, I propose that both texts may be read as eco-literature. However the ecocritical work of both novels is based, not on Western-identified notions of ecocriticism that often prioritize the non-human through what Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin describe as "anti-human" environmentalism. Rather, the novels adopt an Indigenous view of humans and non-humans not as competing subjects, but as interdependent and interrelated parts of one entity: the land. Agary's and Armstrong's renderings of displacement disrupt dominant utilitarian perceptions of the land by showing that it carries meaning and identity that encompasses culture, social, personal and communal existence. I suggest that a reaffirmation of culturally-grounded relations

with the land, a reconnection to land and rebuilding of localized networks between Individuals in eco-devastated communities and between such communities in a form of globalization-from-below provides a strong base for healing, for cultural preservation, and for creative collaborative responses and solutions to globalization. Global minority collaboration and cultural affirmation ultimately has potentials of destabilizing and resisting globalization in sustainable ways. They insulate communities from the hegemony of the dominant Western socio-cultural models.

The close familial ties between Indigenous peoples and the land, coupled with historic, cultural and economic meaning of land to such communities suggest that the loss of traditional land under systems of globalization is a traumatizing and devastating experience for traditional peoples. I argue that such cultural and physical dislocation normalizes a trend of infighting and social instability, which becomes a self-reproducing violence that exacerbates the process of slow genocide: “the emotional and physical harm done to survivors of violence over time that leads to extreme hardship and premature death for many” (Cottam, Huseby, and Lutze 2).

At the heart of Armstrong’s and Agary’s texts are critiques of both environmental and social injustices that emanate from industrial activities on Indigenous traditional lands. The environmental representations of Armstrong and Agary portray Indigenous perspectives that link environmentalism to the cultural, economic and social facets of sustainability. The pan-Indigenous and African environmentalisms represented in *Whispering in Shadows* and in *Yellow-Yellow* respectively do not define “environmental concerns” and issues of justice in terms of separate issues that need linking. Rather, they represent the issues of equity, justice, and environmental, spiritual and cultural stability as a one and the same interrelated issue of sustainability.



**Keywords:** Environmental Injustice, Indigenous Literature, Nigerian Literature, Canadian Literature, Globalization, Slow Violence, Slow Genocide, Displacement, Monstrosity, Ecocriticism, Sustainability.

## Résumé

Ce qui suit analyse des dispositifs environnementaux, culturels, économiques et rhétoriques qui engendrent le déplacement chez les peuples traditionnels autochtones et du Delta de Niger. *Whispering in Shadows* de Jeannette Armstrong et *Yellow-Yellow* de Kaine Agary représentent, de manière similaire, la façon dont les peuples traditionnels autochtones et ceux du Delta de Niger expérimentent les formes contemporaines du génocide lent sous forme de pollution environnementale, ainsi que des déplacements spatiaux. Cette analyse porte un regard particulier sur le sens de la vie, du bien-être et du progrès selon les cultures traditionnelles autochtones qui se basent sur une vision globale de la vie commune sur la Terre ancestrale. Cette cosmologie est mise en contraste avec la culture mondialisée qui encourage notamment l'utilisation non-traditionnelle des terrains et l'exploitation des peuples traditionnels autochtones.

L'environnementalisme autochtone reflété dans les romans d'Armstrong et d'Agary considère les relations des humains avec la Terre comme étant une dépendance familiale interconnectée. Cette relation ne se définit pas sur base des notions extrêmes d'abstinence romancée ou de non-dépendance sur la Terre. Elle n'est pas définie non plus par des notions de l'exploitation écocidaire capitaliste de la Terre. À la lumière de la critique environnementale de *Whispering in Shadows* et de *Yellow-Yellow*, je propose que les deux textes soient lus comme des éco-littératures. Cependant, le travail des deux romans écocritiques est fondé non sur les notions occidentales de l'écocritique qui privilégient souvent les non-humains dans un environnementalisme que Graham Huggan et Helen Tiffin (2010) décrivent comme étant « antihumain », mais plutôt sur celles qui considèrent les humains et les non-humains non pas comme des sujets en concurrence, mais comme les parties interdépendantes et intimement liées au sein d'une seule entité: la Terre. La conception de la question du déplacement selon Agary et

Armstrong déstabilise la perception dominante matérialiste de la Terre en montrant que la Terre est porteuse d'un sens et d'une identité qui peuvent sembler arbitraires, mais qui englobent au fait la culture, la vie sociale, personnelle et communautaire. Je propose qu'une base solide pour gagner la guérison spirituelle, la préservation des cultures marginalisées et la lutte contre la mondialisation se trouve dans la réaffirmation des relations culturellement fondées avec la terre, la reconnexion à la terre et la construction de réseaux localisées entre les individus dans les communautés éco-dévastées, ainsi qu'entre ces communautés, dans une forme de « mondialisation d'en bas. » La collaboration entre les minorités et l'affirmation culturelle ont le potentiel de déstabiliser et de résister à la mondialisation de manière durable. Cette globalisation d'en bas isole aussi les communautés de l'hégémonie des modèles socio-culturels dominants venant souvent de l'occident.

Les liens familiaux étroits que partagent les peuples autochtones et leur Terre, ainsi que les significations historiques, culturels et économiques de la Terre pour ces communautés autochtones, suggèrent que la perte des espaces terrestres traditionnelles sous les systèmes de la mondialisation est vécue comme une véritable expérience traumatisante et dévastatrice. Cette injustice normalise par la suite une tendance de la violence latérale et de l'instabilité sociale qui devient une violence autoreproductrice et qui maintient le processus historique du génocide lent: «le préjudice émotionnel et physique subi par les victimes de la violence au fil du temps qui mène à la pauvreté extrême et à la mort prématurée pour beaucoup» (ma traduction : Cottam, Huseby, et Lutze 2).

Au cœur des textes d'Armstrong et d'Agary se trouvent des critiques contre les injustices sociales et environnementales émanant des activités industrielles dans les espaces traditionnelles autochtones. L'environnementalisme d'Armstrong et d'Agary décrit des cosmologies

autochtones qui interagissent entre l'écologie et les aspects culturelles, économiques et sociaux du développement durable. L'environnementalisme autochtone d'Armstrong et l'environnementalisme africain d'Agary, en fonction de leurs cosmologies traditionnelles respectives, ne conceptualisent pas des «préoccupations environnementales» et les questions de justice dans le contexte des questions distinctes qui devraient être liées comme la culture dominante occidentale les conçoivent. Pour eux, les questions de l'équité, de la justice, de la stabilité environnementale, spirituelle et culturelle ne sont qu'une et la même question du développement durable.

**Mots clés:** Injustice environnementale, Littérature autochtone, Littérature canadienne, Littérature nigériane, Mondialisation, Violence lente, Génocide lent, Déplacement, Monstruosité, Écocritique, Développement durable.

## **Introduction:**

### **The People of the Land and the Land of the People: Slow violence as Genocide**

We, the people of color ... do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to ensure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples.

The First National People of Colour Environmental Leadership Summit, 1991

During the First National People of Colour Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. (1991), a conference that brought together people from around the world, including African and pan-Indigenous peoples, discussions centred on how environmental degradation and displacement remain significant weapons used to control and suppress Indigenous and coloured peoples after five centuries of European contact. The Environmental Justice preamble, drafted following deliberations at the summit, identifies and defines how the concept of interrelatedness is common to the traditional cultures of most Indigenous peoples and peoples of colour around the world, and that this world-view is central to the sustainability of these cultures. Deep ecologists like Arne Naess define interrelatedness in terms of the “awareness of the links that exist amongst everything in nature such that nature [entails] an

integral whole [,] each component or part of which needs or supports another for its existence” (qtd in Sahni 121). In as much as Indigenous cultures conceived the self as an integral part of a whole - the land - the minority people attached to such cultures are deeply affected by the pollution of the land, as well as the social and environmental injustice linked with the disrespect and misuse of sacred traditional spaces. Rob Nixon conceptualizes the impact of environmental destruction on marginalized peoples in terms of slow violence:

By slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space.... We need, I believe, to engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales. (2)

Nixon’s conceptualizing of environmental degradation, as well as the displacements that it creates in terms of lethal violence similar to acts of war, is grounded upon his assessment of the devastating social, cultural, spiritual, and economic effects of such acts upon Indigenous peoples whose definition of self, family, and whose sustenance, as I argue further, are grounded upon their connectedness to and relations with the land (41).

At the First National People of Colour Environmental Leadership Summit, Indigenous critics and Niger Delta environmentalists recognized that the idea of genocide should not only be perceived in terms of the massacre of entire populations, but should also include environmental practices, as well as governmental, social and political processes and legislation that impede the long-term survival of cultural communities. Israel W. Charny analyses different forms of time-delimited genocide: genocidal massacre, intentional genocide, genocide in the course of initial

colonization, genocide in war, etc. (76-77). He also discusses what he calls “long term practices” that ultimately have the same genocidal effect as time-delimited or short-term genocide (76-77).

Polly Higgins links sustained processes of environmental devastation and ecocide, especially among minority Indigenous circles, to genocide, and defines ecocide as “the extensive destruction, damage to or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory, whether by human agency or by other causes, to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been severely diminished” (63). Laura Westra argues that the idea that all ecocide can be interpreted as genocide is a sweeping generalization, but suggests that the conception of ecocide in terms of genocide significantly depends on the intentions of those who cause the damage (164-165). Westra is quick to point out, however, that “intent” may often be difficult to establish (164). Nevertheless, she insists that the environmental, social and political conditions that deprive a people of the necessary conditions of their existence can be considered as genocide (165).

Twenty-first century Indigenous Canadian literature and literatures from Nigeria’s Niger Delta represent how Indigenous peoples and Niger Deltans experience contemporary forms of genocide as a result of environmental pollution and various forms of displacement from their ancestral spaces. *Whispering in Shadows*, a novel written by Okanagan writer Jeannette Armstrong, and *Yellow-Yellow*, a novel by Ijaw Niger Delta writer Kaine Agary, represent the familial connections that traditional pan-Indigenous and Niger Delta peoples share with their environment, and characterize how ecocide consequently represents genocide for traditional African and Pan-Indigenous populations.

My study of Okanagan and Ijaw characters in Armstrong’s and Agary’s novels is premised on the analysis of their representations of Indigenous spiritual cosmologies that are

often built on notions of interdependence and interrelatedness between all of existence: humans, animals, plants, rocks, rivers, etc. Although there is a lack of studies on Ijaw culture, Ijaw traditions are founded on the following concepts according to community members:

The first is that all things, be they human beings, interest groups or animals, must not infringe on each others [*sic*] time and space, following the principle that no two things can occupy the same time and space at the same time. The second is that all things, be they human beings, interest groups, enterprises, animals and plants, are part of a unified system function as a whole. (Binaebi Benatari, par. 19)

The Ijaw traditions recognize that the earth is one “unified system” made up of humans and non-human spiritual and physical occupants of the land who are guided by the principles of equity, justice and fairness. In *Yellow-Yellow*, Zilayefa, also known as Laye and Yellow-Yellow (because of her Greek-Nigerian background), communicates with the birds, the river, and the spirits of the land. Her understanding of Wokiri - an island that serves Laye and her friends as a hide-out from the oil pollution and violence in their village - equally portrays her interrelatedness with the land. Similarly, the Okanagan world-view of the Earth-as-kin, portrayed by the protagonist Penny in *Whispering in Shadows*, demonstrates how, as Simon Ortiz argues, “land and people are interdependent [and] are one and the same essential matter of Existence” (xii). For both characters, the conceptualization of community, culture, social life and subsistence are defined by their respective Indigenous traditional cosmologies. Laye’s and Penny’s understandings of their interrelatedness to the land, the deepening of bonds between them and their families, and even the passing down of traditional customs, history and philosophy are also intertwined in the self-sustaining culture of farming that is, of course, practised on the land.



The notion of interrelatedness demonstrated through the analysis of both novels does not attempt to provide a global interpretation of how all Indigenous minorities in Canada and Nigeria conceive of themselves in relations with the land and community. Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen argue that “[u]rban Indigenous peoples have resisted expectations of assimilation by building communities in and beyond urban areas and by reformulating Western institutions and practices to support their particular Indigenous identities” (2). Lee Maracle states: “Every time Native people form a circle they turn around. They move forward, not backward into history. We don’t have to ‘go back to the land.’ We never left it. We are not reptiles or amphibians that lived in the sea and now wish to go back to the land” (384). Indigenous peoples in urban environments possess their own identities and relations with the land that is still spiritually and culturally connected to their Indigenous self-identity in relation to the land, although such identities are not consistent with essentialist notions of ‘authentic’ indigeneity.

Agary’s and Armstrong’s novels contrast the traditional Indigenous sense of life, well-being, and progress grounded in a holistic view of communal life on traditional land with the non-traditional use of the land and exploitation of pan-Indigenous and African traditional people produced by the dominant socio-economic realities controlled by the forces of globalization. The close familial ties between Indigenous peoples and the land, coupled with the historic, cultural and economic meaning of the land to such communities suggest that the loss of traditional land under systems of globalization is a traumatizing and devastating experience for Indigenous peoples in Nigeria and Canada, as represented in the novels under study. Such cultural dislocation normalizes a trend of domestic violence and social instability that perpetrates a process of slow genocide, which is “the emotional and physical harm done to survivors of

violence over time that leads to extreme hardship and premature death for many” (Cottam, Huseby and Lutze 2).

My work interrogates how Agary and Armstrong use symbolic imagery that disrupts normative conceptions of the effects of ecocide on the environment. Nixon states that “reflections on empire, foreign policy, and resistance [using] aesthetic strateg[ies]” are generally the central concerns of environmental literary criticism (32). He also points out that such aesthetic work should be grounded in “the broader socio-political environmental contexts that animate the [represented aesthetic] forms” (32). My comparative analysis of *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow* accordingly conceptualizes the symbolic representations of globalization as an invisible and indecipherable monster.

Peter Christoff and Robyn Eckersley state that globalization in contemporary times entails “increasing international specialization and exchange, more intense economic competition, and improvements in transportation and communication” (7). They argue that while globalization “[has] brought many benefits, including a variety of cheaper goods to those in the affluent consuming centers of the world ... these developments have clearly come at a considerable ecological price, particularly for those living outside the consuming centers” (7). Although Christoff and Eckersley point out that globalization “cannot be singled out as the new or only 'cause' of environmental degradation” (10), they insist that “the contemporary processes of globalization have served as very significant *intensifiers* and *accelerants* of the burning fuse of ecological degradation” (10). Globalization, according to Christoff and Eckersley, is a “tragedy” (168) that “[makes] it more difficult for human societies to critically reflect upon, and take control of their social and environmental destinies” (11).

*Yellow-Yellow* portrays globalization within a Nigerian social economy that gravitates around petro-culture (an obsession for the political and economic assets accrued from the oil extraction industry). *Whispering in Shadows* portrays a North American neo-liberal economy that tries to submerge the traditional subsistence economy of traditional Indigenous communities. The impoverishing impact of neoliberal globalization upon minority and Indigenous populations, as characterized in *Yellow-Yellow* and in *Whispering in Shadows*, is reflected through the pollution of the land, water, and air, as well as through the exploitation of the poor. Pollution as a result of environmentally unsafe industrial processes dislocates minority peoples from their relations with their traditional lands. Unmaintained pipelines in *Yellow-Yellow* result in an oil spill that destroys the farms, and thus the livelihood of local populations. Similarly, *Whispering in Shadows* represents how the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples are appropriated for industrial purposes or through socio-economic policies and legislation.

Tom Flanagan, Christopher Alcantara and André Le Dressay historicize the processes that displaced Indigenous peoples in the United States and Canada from the North American economy:

We had been prosperous even after contact as an integral part of the fur trade. But in the 1800s [the governments in Canada and in the US] began to destroy our economic institutions, which had always supported our trade. And then they prohibited us from participating in the new economy and new trading relationships that they established. And finally they saddled us with a property-rights system that prevented trade and created a 100-year credit crisis from which we have yet to recover. (x)

Armstrong's essay, "The Disempowerment of First North American Native Peoples and Empowerment Through Their Writing," argues that contemporary neoliberal globalization in

North America maintains the history of the economic, social and cultural marginalization of Indigenous peoples (242).

Sarah Maddison defines the intentional destabilisation of Indigenous social and economic structures in terms of genocide. She argues that the “concept of genocide” is “much wider than the popular understanding of the practice as one of mass extermination” (34). Analyzing Christopher Powell's definition of the scope of genocide, Maddison states that “the concept of genocide extends to the destruction of the foundations of life of the national group, including the destruction of language, culture, religious and social institutions, with the intended aim of annihilating the group” (34). Maddison argues that “we may think of practices intended to absorb or assimilate a minority group into a dominant group as being genocidal in intent” (34).

In *Whispering in Shadows* the Okanagan are not dispossessed of their land through logging or by means of institutionalized enslavement as are other Indigenous communities represented in the novel, but they are displaced by the fact that neoliberalism in the contemporary North American society changes their economic and social realities, so that the hitherto sustainable communal production and dependence on land is no longer viable or sustainable. So although the land is not physically taken from the Okanagan in *Whispering in Shadows* in the same way that environmental pollution gradually and continually reduces the productivity and viability of agriculture in the Niger Delta in *Yellow-Yellow*, contemporary globalization as represented in *Whispering in Shadows* gradually reduces the value and sustainability of Indigenous subsistence agriculture. Thus, whether peoples' lands are forcibly taken from them or they leave because land can no longer assure subsistence, displacement in all its forms produces a spiritual, cultural, historic and material loss of land or of identification with the land.

Beyond the despair, frustration, dispossession and victimization that are commonplace in the daily experiences of most minorities represented by Agary and Armstrong, these marginalized people unyieldingly struggle for survival. They constantly re-invent themselves, their ideologies, and their traditional practices. Agary and Armstrong show how individual isolated struggles, radicalized movements, and self-reinvention can save marginalized people from the silent genocide. They also portray, however, that most of these adaptations are often co-opted by hegemonic socio-economic forces and are thereby riddled with ambivalence to the extent that they exacerbate the violence perpetrated by the systems of social and environmental injustice. In *Yellow-Yellow*, for example, Niger Delta youths engage in fighting, killing, and bunkery - vandalization of crude oil pipelines in order to illegally tap crude oil - for the 'progress' of the Niger Delta. In *Whispering in Shadows* the Chiapas guerrilla movement is a radicalized resistance formed by marginalized Indigenous peoples in Mexico. Both of these activist groups show how social and environmental devastation can influence radical resistance that may reproduce violence within the community.

In *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow* cultural adaptations made by the characters in order to survive dislocation can be viewed as forms of resistance. Impoverished by environmental deterioration and loss of land, some female characters in the novels find no other means of subsistence other than sexual labour. These characters engage in prostitution or sex work in order to meet their emotional needs for companionship, and to meet the financial and material needs of their families. I argue that prostitution, as an adaptation to slow violence, ironically reinforces the violence of the system rather than act against it. In *Whispering in Shadows* it is suggested that Lena engages in prostitution in order to survive in Vancouver. She becomes addicted to drugs while trying to fill the void created by her own disconnection from

her community and from the traditional ways of being on the land. She confides in her younger sister Penny: “I got this need. I don’t quite know what it is. It’s like I can’t live alone. I don’t know how. Like I’m not a full person. Like my arms and legs are missing. Like I needed somebody to be there, even if he’s shit. And all of them were” (271-272). Her need for companionship, and her addiction to drugs, exposes her to systemic and domestic violence. She becomes impoverished and homeless, and she is physically abused by her violent partner Harry.

Similarly, in *Yellow-Yellow* young women from Laye’s village who are dislocated by poverty and social unrest in the village find prostitution to be their only means of livelihood in the city of Port Harcourt. They endure exploitation and sexual and physical abuse from the foreign oil workers they attempt to attract. Laye narrates: “Girls did anything to get a whitey .... If it meant putting a scar on another girl’s face for daring to swoop in on the whitey they discovered and laid claims to first, then they were prepared for the battle” (37). Some members of the displaced community take to radicalism, criminality, and vandalism as a way of protesting and adapting to slow violence: “If we had to suffer amidst such plenty, then these boys would cause as much havoc as possible until someone took interest in our plight and until justice, as they saw it, prevailed. Some of them joined the boys from other villages to kidnap oil company executives or bar oil company workers from doing their work” (9-10). In Ngozi Chuma-Udeh’s words, “Agary views the sabotage and vandalism of oil infrastructure and theft of oil as having serious consequences for the Niger Delta ecology” (119). On the radical mission of the youths, Laye narrates: “[m]ostly they were successful, but sometimes one or two of our boys failed to return from a mission. The word around the village was that the police had caught and killed them” (10). The youths’ radicalism, rather than creating justice, exacerbates the eco-devastation, as well as the injustice and slow genocide in the Niger Delta.

In *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows* forms of adaptation provide immediate means to survive starvation and homelessness. Despite the normalization of these responses to dislocation, such as bunkery, radicalism, and prostitution, they often lead to social unrest, environmental degradation, cultural and social disorientation, and trauma, and thereby maintaining the historically-grounded slow genocide of the Okanagan and Ijaw peoples.

Figuratively, both novels dramatize the reproductive violence of globalization under notions of a faceless monstrosity that functions within the irony of a present and unseen evil. The neoliberal global socio-economic system is represented as widespread, hegemonic, and exploitative, but the powers behind it, as represented in both novels, are often impersonal and cannot be clearly isolated. Both novels show, for instance, that the ambivalence of some resistance by agents fighting for marginalized peoples exacerbates the violence, trauma and ecocide being resisted.

I analyse the hegemony of the global system by showing its influence upon those who possess economic, social, and political agency to objectively and strategically speak back to power. Both novels show how local and marginalized peoples struggle individually and collectively to adapt to changing social, economic and environmental conditions in order to survive. Both novels show that even the resistant social actors often get caught in the overarching hegemony of globalization. Admiral in *Yellow-Yellow* uses his wealth, and his social and political status as a retired senior military official to resist the exploitation of Niger Deltans. However his influence and power allows him to sexually exploit unsuspecting young women. The financial assistance he gives to radicalized Ijaw youth contributes to the proliferation of both arms and violence in the Niger Delta. Despite his activism and philanthropy, he reproduces and contributes to the injustice of the system. Likewise, in *Whispering in Shadows* Penny's resistance

entrenches her in the dominant socio-economic culture that she resists. Her trauma, disease, and death are caused by capitalist industrial activities and by the socio-economic realities prevalent in North America. Neither Admiral in *Yellow-Yellow* nor Penny in *Whispering in Shadows* is complicit with the forces of globalization, for their goals are grounded in their ability to fight against a neo-colonial mentality and the effects of globalization. However, both novels use these characters to represent how anti-globalization campaigns (such as social and community-focused projects aimed at creating economic stimulus for the underprivileged and underemployed), opposition to oppressive military regimes and the military-industrial complex, and environmental protection from state-sponsored global corporations can ironically entrench the hegemonic power of globalization. Both novels portray how personalized resistance, irrespective of the willpower of the actors, can only be, as Armstrong puts it, a “whisper” against an unseen and all-encompassing “shadow” of hegemonic power.

*Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows* do not suggest, however, that resistance is futile. Rather, they represent the hegemony and the pervasiveness of globalization and portray how a localized community-centred system of adaptation, instead of a global or nation-centred resistance, can be an effective form of resistance to globalization. While Agary’s text emphasizes the healing, as well as the sense of wholeness and purpose that traditional peoples regain by reconnecting to the land and to the family, Armstrong shows how localized systems of socio-economic and cultural collaborations both strengthens cultures against slow genocide and provides a forum for creative innovations for economic agency. Louisa Sorflaten argues that in *Whispering in Shadows* “Penny’s commitment to fighting globalization through her art and activist work [is] a call for a return to Aboriginal localism as a model for recovering and maintaining the particularities of Indigenous difference in a global era” (384). Sorflaten explains



that “[w]ith the advent of global mass culture, there is rejuvenated scholarly interest in small scale movements rooted in ‘place’ such as regionalisms and localisms as sites of resistance to the homogenizing meta-narratives of globalization” (385). The redefinition of regionalism by Frank Davey views collaboration within local communities as “strategic political sites for democratic resistance to global assumptions” (qtd in Sorflaten 385). However, Indigenous and postcolonial critics such as Lee Maracle and Davey insist, as Sorflaten states, that if the local is to be an acceptable working concept, it must allow for interactions between its traditions and conventions and other ideologies (Sorflaten 385). Armstrong does portray a system of “localism” that is open to interactions and innovation. The Mayan and the Okanagan cooperative projects constitute patterns of globalization-from-below that entail localized community collaboration for economic emancipation, as well as transnational cooperation among marginalized Indigenous peoples in the spirit of unity, equity and justice. In contrast to Armstrong’s representation of localism as resistance, Agary’s representation of the polluted Niger Delta land looks at education for women and portrays spiritual reconnections to transcendence, to the land and to family as possible ways of healing the trauma of slow violence, while it provides resistance against the dominant systems of petro-culture.

Social historians and environmental justice critics emphasize that environmental degradation and deterritorialisation, coupled with political and economic disempowerment of Indigenous peoples, act as weapons of war that threaten the sustainable survival of Niger Delta and pan-Indigenous communities. Susan Comfort explores the history of oil production in Nigeria and makes the connection between Shell’s high oil production profits and Niger Delta peoples’ impoverishment, sickness and death due to air, land and water pollution, as well as the violence and social injustice resulting from Shell’s activities in the region. According to

Comfort, oil production in the Niger Delta began in 1958, and since then multinational companies, especially Shell, have been complicit with Nigerian governments in creating what David K. Leonard and Scott Straus refer to as an “enclave economy” (7). Shell dominates the “technology, management, and profits” of oil production in the Delta (Comfort 233). The multinational company pumped over 30 billion dollars’ worth of crude oil from the Niger Delta within its first three decades of operation in the country (Comfort 233). Comfort argues that the oil boom of the early 1980s, the paradox of the subsequent debt crisis, and the structural adjustment programme imposed by the IMF that allowed oil companies to wield more control over the oil industry and to be immune to market restrictions, resulted in increased oil production and profits. Total production from the Niger Delta increased from 308 million barrels in 1970 to 703,455 million barrels in 1991 (Azaiki 87). According to Steve Azaiki and Augustine Ikein “[t]he peak of [Shell’s] production came in the 1980s when the total output was 753.5 million barrels per annum, out of which 93 percent was exported overseas” (79). Not surprisingly, the gains of the oil boom have resulted in devastation to both the Niger Delta environment and the sustainability of its Indigenous populations. Julius O. Ihonvbere and Timothy Shaw state that between 1976 and 1991, there were nearly 3000 oil spills totalling over two million barrels of oil spilled (238; see also Comfort 233) destroying hectares of farm land and polluting rivers that are the major sources of subsistence for these people. According to UNDP Niger Delta Human Development Report of 2006, more than 60 percent of the people in the region depend on the natural environment for their sustenance (28). The survival of Niger Delta’s villagers hangs in the balance due to environmentally unsafe processes of oil production in the region.

Environmental degradation also endangers the health of Niger-Deltans. Nnimmo Bassey states that “[w]orld-wide, an estimated 168 billion cubic meters of natural gas is flared yearly,

and 13 percent of it is in Nigeria (at about 23 billion cubic meters per year)” (122). Cancers, tuberculosis and other grave medical conditions caused by gas flares are widespread in the region (Huggan and Tiffin 40). There is also neither alternative provision for a healthy water supply nor efficient health care services (Nixon 108). As a result of these traumatizing conditions, as well as the Niger Delta’s history of colonialism, suppression and exploitation, Ken Saro-Wiwa argued that the Niger Delta, and particularly the Ogoni, experienced what can only be called “genocide”:

The Ogoni country has been completely destroyed by the search for oil.... Oil blow-outs, spillages, oil slick and general pollution accompany the search for oil.... Oil companies have flared gas in Nigeria for the past thirty-three years causing acid rain.... What used to be the bread basket of the delta has now become totally infertile. All one feels and sees around is death. Environmental degradation has been a lethal weapon in the war against the Indigenous Ogoni people. (qtd in Nixon 110-111)

Saro-Wiwa wrote and fought against the devastating ecological conditions that the Ogoni people were subjected to as a result of Shell’s environmental racism and the Nigerian military’s insensitivity. He asserted: “[t]he Ogoni people were being killed all right, but in an unconventional way” (*A Month* 88). Despite his testimony against slow genocide and the international outcry condemning his imprisonment, he and other Ogoni chieftains were executed by the Nigerian military.

In Canada, non-lethal systems of genocide have been, and are still being used to annihilate and assimilate Indigenous peoples. In her essay “The Disempowerment of First North American Native Peoples and Empowerment Through Their Writing,” Armstrong criticizes the general machinery of colonization and cultural imperialism for the cultural and material genocide of Indigenous peoples: “[i]n the 498 years of contact in the Americas, the thrust of this bloody

sword [of colonization] has been to hack out the spirit of all the beautiful cultures encountered, leaving in its wake a death toll unrivalled in recorded history. This is what happened and what continues to happen” (242). Indigenous writers, including Jeannette Armstrong, Lee Maracle, Marie Clements and Thomas King all portray the ethnic cleansing and the “pacification” of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Armstrong’s novel *Whispering in Shadows*, Lee Maracle’s *I Am a Woman*, Thomas King’s novel *Truth & Bright Water*, and Marie Clements’ *Burning Vision* are just a few examples of Indigenous texts that rehistoricize Indigenous peoples’ treatment by Canadian settlers. Aboriginal writers assert that “what happened” is indeed genocide, and that “what continues to happen” is only a recycling of the old processes of genocide, albeit in the form of long-term genocide through the processes of environmental violence.

Joy Porter, referring to the American Indian experience, states that “the battles for Indian survival are far from over. Contemporary Indian communities face acute on-going threats to the sovereignty of their remaining land base and to the ecological balance of Indian environments from, amongst other things, nuclear testing, nuclear waste disposal, coal strip mining and oil, logging, and uranium extraction” (40). Mining and other acts of resource extraction in Indigenous peoples’ traditional spaces result in environmental damage that endangers the continued survival of the plants, animals and ancestral spaces such as rocks, rivers, traplines, and farm land that make up traditional Indigenous territory. The fact remains that the long-term genocidal effects of mining activities that are widespread in Indigenous communities has not stopped the ongoing execution of similar projects. Annie Smith points out that the long-term effect of tar sand oil production in Alberta may be difficult to establish, but that the immediate effect of the project already points to what is to come. She states:

There is a nuclear power plant planned for Grimshaw – an hour away – for the sole purpose of providing power for oil sands extraction. We do know that the people at Fort Chipewyan are suffering unprecedented rates of cancer. We do know that the wildfowl and other wildlife are having their habitat destroyed due to the oil sands extractions. We do know that the oil sands extractions are using and polluting huge amounts of water, which is, in turn, poisoning vast tracts of land and our water systems. (Smith 58)

Smith enumerates instances of where industrial activities on Indigenous territory has devastating impact on the land, the water, the plants and animals that Indigenous communities have traditionally depended on for their subsistence. Economic globalization in Canada continues to foster slow violence that endangers Indigenous peoples and their traditions. Armstrong states:

Our original communities have disintegrated; the long-term condition of the human species, and other life forms, has become secondary to short-term profit for the few, allowing for poor choices that have altered the health and lives of millions. I have come to understand that unless change occurs in the ways in which communities use the land, the well being [*sic*] and survival of us all is at risk. (Armstrong 1999)

Like Armstrong, James Daschuk argues that water, air, land, and food were used as biological weapons to poison and to displace Indigenous communities in Canada (xv-xvi). The effects of mining and resource extraction on Indigenous territories ultimately amount to the slow genocide of Indigenous populations. Similarly, the endangering of Indigenous spiritual, economic and cultural spaces, the imposition of wage-labour and the subtle dismantling of traditional subsistence living in Indigenous communities disempower Indigenous peoples and expose them to exploitation. Accordingly, the resulting emotional anger, suicide, and violence that affect Indigenous peoples create a slowly evolving genocide over time in Indigenous spaces.

The work that follows analyses how the effects of the neo-colonial economic system of globalization endangers the survival of minority Indigenous cultures in traditional Niger-Delta and North-American Indigenous communities as represented in works of literary fiction. I argue that ecocide and various forms of displacement that constitute slow violence against the represented minority peoples, coupled with the lethally violent effects of the self-reproduction of the systems of globalization in the adaptive response and activism of marginalized peoples against political and economic power, slowly and continually reproduce the long-term process of genocide among the traditional peoples represented in *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows*.

Jeannette Armstrong's and Kaine Agary's literary works, as well as their activism and social commitments, are socio-cultural works that actively seek to deconstruct the seemingly progressive systems of petro-culture and economic globalization that perpetuate spiritual, cultural and economic dislocation of Indigenous and ethnic minorities in Nigeria and Canada. The novels respectively represent the history and colonial experiences of Okanagan and Ijaw peoples in ways that critique the extremely politicized and debilitating overt and covert violence affecting Indigenous peoples globally.

Jeannette Armstrong's contribution to community development includes her work on the establishment of the En'owkin centre for creative arts based in Pentincton, British Colombia. The centre includes an Indigenous-run press, Theytus and an International School of Writing. It offers Canada's only creative writing program created and run by Indigenous people. Lally Grauer remarks that "Indigenous scholars and writers from all over Canada and the US came to the Okanagan to teach and study. Throughout the 1990s, this institution played an important role in encouraging many authors to get into print, and in furthering the development of a national

network of Indigenous writers in Canada” (Grauer). Armstrong is also, as Grauer states, “a novelist, poet, and spokesperson for Indigenous peoples' rights to land and justice, to education and language, and to a healthy environment. In her novels and poetry, Armstrong experiments using language and form” (Grauer). Although she uses English to articulate Okanagan language and concepts, she portrays the Okanagan conception of the interrelatedness of community as comprising not only people but also the land and spirits that inhabit it. In *Whispering in Shadows* Armstrong uses her Okanagan world-view to describe the land and all that lives on it. She portrays the Indigenous conception of all of existence in terms of animate beings. The novel fictionalizes the complex and hegemonic processes of globalization that collectively affect Indigenous peoples all over the Americas, and portrays the interconnectedness of the struggles of diverse Indigenous peoples, as well as the possibilities for Indigenous sustainability through pan-Indigenous communality.

Kaine Agary is a writer, editor and public spokesperson. She is the founder of Dtalkshop, which publishes Nigeria's premier Law tabloid *Wetin Lawyers Dey Do...Sef*, and the Editor of TAKAii, a magazine that covers legal issues in creatively entertaining and educative ways. *Yellow-Yellow* is Agary's first work of fiction. In an interview with Geosi Gyasi, Agary explains the reason she wrote the novel:

*Yellow-Yellow* was my response to the frustration I felt from meeting many Nigerians who were ignorant of the issues in the Niger-Delta and why there was so much agitation in the late 1990s. What most people, even Nigerians, knew was based on media propaganda, which highlighted the youth violence and portrayed everyone talking about the Niger-Delta as militants or rabble rousers. (Gyasi)

*Yellow-Yellow* takes the perspective of young Niger Deltans and represents the Ijaw in the light of a society actively struggling for survival under unliveable environmental conditions; a society that is also rich with deeply spiritually grounded cultures, values, and interrelationships amongst people, land, and the spiritual world. *Yellow-Yellow* is particularly distinctive for its representation of infighting among Niger Delta youths, which questions the truth of youth militancy, and shows how contradictions in resistive groups may be influenced by those in power. Agary demonstrates the complexity of the issue of violence in Niger Delta villages and creeks. In the novel, the varying stances of the general public and of the dispossessed, as well as the rendering of the motivating factors behind militancy among the youths, opens a wider horizon for interrogating armed resistance and militancy in the Niger Delta. Despite the fact that militancy, vandalism and kidnapping are responses to historic dispossession and slow violence, in Agary's view, they could also embody issues of greed and personal ambition that may or may not be linked to the corruption of the dominant petro-culture.

Both *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows* were self-edited by each writer under the auspices of their respective publishing houses: Dtalkshop for Agary and Theytus for Armstrong. While Theytus is an Indigenous-run publishing house created for Indigenous peoples' creative writing, Dtalkshop, in Agary's terms, "is a social enterprise that aims to increase legal literacy and awareness in Nigeria. [The Dtalkshop crew] believes that the law defines all of our interactions in society, therefore it is important that everyone is reasonably aware of these laws, their rights and responsibilities especially given the postulate that says: Ignorance of the law is no excuse" (Gyasi). Kaine Agary is a legal practitioner and channels her knowledge towards youth development by visiting schools and by mentoring and informing youths through her magazine, whereas Armstrong is an Indigenous environmental rights activist, who is also



actively involved in the artistic development of youth through her work in the En'owkin Centre. The pedagogical interests of both writers can be seen in the critical and the didactic groundings of their selected texts.

Nevertheless, while *Yellow-Yellow* was well received and won prestigious awards including the ANA Chevron Prize for Environmental Writing in 2007 and the Nigeria Prize for Literature in 2008, *Whispering in Shadows* has been quietly ignored by many Canadian literary critics. The few critics who have analysed the book similarly reproach the author for often abandoning the narrative and engaging in stiff lectures. Suzanne Methot praises Armstrong for doing “a good job of bringing readers into the creative mind [of the protagonist]” (Par. 3), but criticizes the fact that Penny is an “explain-it-all narrative device” rather than a “nuanced character” (Par. 3). Jeanne Perreault similarly queries Armstrong for presenting “much of the political information” as “polemic rather than in the dramatic forms of the apple picking or the Chiapas visit” (Par. 8). However, it is important to point out that Armstrong’s writing emphasizes the place of the Okanagan language and cosmology in her novel, and destabilizes dominant categories within Western constructs of artistic expression. Jane Haladay argues that “Armstrong asserts a form of Okanagan literary self-determination that privileges indigenous thoughtways” (38). Armstrong herself, in “Land Speaking,” explains her source of literary expression: “[i]n Okanagan storytelling, the ability to move the audience back and forth between the present reality and the story reality relies heavily on the fluidity of time sense that the language offers. In particular, stories that are used for teaching must be inclusive of the past, present, and future [,] as well as the current or contemporary moment and the story reality” (194). The didactic nature of Armstrong’s text is connected to Okanagan beliefs that some stories are meant mainly for instruction. My intention here is not to defend the obvious lack of detailed

editing of the text, but I do want to suggest Armstrong's purported lecture-style narrative technique consistently acts as an unapologetically incongruous resistance to dominant Western colonial and neo-colonial systems.

Agary's text is considered by many Nigerian critics, including Sunny Awhefeada, as probably the first literary work on the environmental pollution of the Niger Delta written by a woman. Critics such as J.E. Akung, A. Iloege, Ngozi Chuma-Udeh, Philip Onoriode Aghoghovwia, and Joy M. Etiowo praise Agary for her ability to critique the sexual exploitation of women in terms of the ecocidal environmental rape occurring in the Niger Delta. They recognize Agary's portrayal of Niger Delta women and girls as the prime victims of social conflicts, corruption and environmental hazards. Awhefeada suggests that the novel analogously compares the female body to the environment, and he analyses the link between the invasion of the Niger Delta by Western resource extraction companies and the disempowerment of African women as a result of both old and contemporary systems of colonialism that denies them access to the land (xv). J.E. Akung and A. Iloege equally state that "it is this violation and pollution and the eventual devastation of the woman that form the thematic nucleus of this novel" (80). Akung and Iloege analyse the different strands of moral, sexualized, political and environmental pollution and corruption that affects the nation. Even though they disagree with Agary's idea of new birth for Nigeria after the death of dictator Gen. Sani Abacha, stating that the democratic era that began since then "has changed little of the travail of the citizenry" (83), they still commend Agary for the creative work that helps "bring ecological awareness to the larger [Nigerian] society" (83).

The critical analysis that has been undertaken on both novels underscores how the authors create imageries and metaphors that give a voice to the land. Perreault, for instance, makes

connections between cancer and an imagery of the functioning of global capitalism in *Whispering in Shadows* (Par. 8), while Chuma-Udeh analyses Agary's portrayal of the "body and [the] environment" in terms of a creative imagination of the interrelations between "human psychological individuality and political themes" (110). The authors' similar symbolic representation of the violence on land in terms of violence against Indigenous bodies is central to their portrayal of the deep relations between traditional cultures and the land, as well as the immense negative impact of ecocide on the people of the land.

Moreover, as Lee Maracle asserts, Indigenous writing is not only a strategy of decolonization that seeks to protest against dispossession, assimilation, and marginalization, but it is also a potent opportunity of "writing home" instead of simply "writing back" (qtd in Henzi). *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow* can be described as *Littérature engagée* that teaches both Indigenous peoples that sustainability lies *a priori* in Indigenous cosmic traditions of connectedness to the land and community.

The Indigenous cosmologies grounded in *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows* teach that humans are dependent upon the tangible and spiritual environment for subsistence and sustainability. They teach, as Neil Evernden asserts, that "there is no such thing as an individual, only an individual-in-context, individual as a component of place, defined by place" (103). Indigenous environmentalism, as reflected in Armstrong's and Agary's novels, therefore views human relationships with the land in terms of an interconnected familial dependence, and not in terms of extreme ideas of total abstinence from land or of capitalist ecocidal exploitation of land.

My analysis of the interconnectedness of Indigenous peoples, communities, and ancestral spaces does not pre-suppose, however, that Niger Deltans or Indigenous peoples in Canada lived in a social and environmental paradise of order and harmony prior to economic globalization.

Agary, for instance, deconstructs the romanticized representations of Niger Delta peoples. She portrays social injustice and familial fragmentation in the pre-petro-cultural Ijaw village by portraying a patriarchal system of masculine domination and suppression of women in the Ijaw community. Rather than portraying essentialist ideas of a perfectly harmonious society, Agary focuses on the ways that the fractured, but self-sustaining communities become economically unsustainable and rife with violence and forced displacements for the sake of development that profits only a few people who hold political, military and economic power.

While *Yellow-Yellow* portrays social fragmentation, *Whispering in Shadows* reflects on how subsistence living in Indigenous cultures was often precarious, yet sustainable. In *Whispering in Shadows* communal farming necessitates hard work. Penny's family digs, backs bent, under a sun that not only spiritually wraps people around with its warmth, as the novel emphasizes, but also causes a discomforting heat for the Indigenous farmers. *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow*, rather than portraying essentialist notions of social and environmental holism, critique the ways in which globalization further severs the interconnectedness between indigenous peoples and communities to the extent that living on the land could become unsustainable. In the light of the environmental criticism that both *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows* create, they may be read as eco-literature. However the ecocritical work of both novels are based not on Western-identified notions of ecocriticism, which often prioritize the non-human through what Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin describe as "anti-human" environmentalism, but rather through an Indigenous view of humans and non-humans, not as competing subjects, but as interdependent and interrelated parts of one entity: the land.

Rob Nixon describes the seemingly non-lethal act of environmental degradation as displacement-without-moving. Both novels emphasize trauma, poverty, rage and violence as effects of the violence of displacement. In *Yellow-Yellow* there is so much psychological frustration, violence, and social and cultural disorder related to the environmental degradation that Laye has to seek “salvation” outside of her traditional space. She refers to her village as a “claustrophobic” (17) space from which she has to be saved: “I just wanted to leave the village. The sameness of life in the village would kill me if I did not escape” (10). Similarly, in *Whispering in Shadows*, due to economic globalization and fair trade agreements between Mexico and the United States, the Mayan people are coerced into selling their lands for industrial purposes through the practice of price-regulation. Displaced by war, ecocide, and economic globalization, the Mayan community is submerged in poverty, social unrest and violence.

Armstrong's and Agary's texts critique the environmental and social injustices that emanate from industrial activities on Indigenous traditional lands. Armstrong's pan-Indigenous and Agary's African-centred environmentalisms, based upon their respective Indigenous cosmologies, do not necessarily differentiate between environmental concerns and issues of justice in terms of separate issues that need linking. In the article “Let Us Begin with Courage,” Armstrong argues that issues of equity and justice, and of environmental, spiritual, and cultural stability, are related issues. She maintains that the natural process of environmental survival and sustainability for the Okanagan involves the engagement in building total community that entails deeply connected relations between the self, the family, the human community and the land:

First, we can expect each individual to fully appreciate that, while each person is singularly gifted, each actualizes full human potential only as a result of physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual well being.... Second, as an individual, each person

is a single facet of a transgenerational organism known as a family.... Third, the family system is the foundation of a long-term living network called community.... Finally, a community is the living process that interacts with the vast and ancient body of intricately connected patterns operating in perfect unison called the land. It is imperative that community — through the family and the individual — be seen as a whole system engaged in maintaining the principles that insure its well being. (Armstrong 1999)

Armstrong analyses the deep organismic connections between individual humans and families, between families and communities, and between communities and land. The “perfect unison” as she calls it, between people and land, represents the idea of interrelatedness in Okanagan traditions. The maintenance of the Okanagan and Ijaw traditions, spirituality, as well as issues of justice and equity, are as indicative of Indigenous “green commitment” as activism on issues of land use and fracking for instance. Accordingly, Agary’s and Armstrong’s critiques of contemporary social and economic systems show a broad-based “green commitment” that does not limit its critique to the exploitation of the physical land, but addresses the wider issues of Indigenous cultural and material sustainability. Armstrong’s and Agary’s novels inscribe, therefore, Indigenous perception of the value and meaning ascribed to the land, while destabilizing dominant materialistic conception of land and critiquing the ways that industrial progress at the expense of the sanctity of land and of the deep interrelatedness between traditional minority groups and the land, makes for a material and symbolic violence that progressively and continuously threatens the sustained survival of the represented minority groups in the selected novels.

## Chapter One:

### Violence Against the Land as Violence Against the Body: Contemporary Shades of

#### Genocide in *Whispering in Shadows* and in *Yellow-Yellow*

Globalization ... the question of globe plotting / plot-izing the globe / marking into plots / person by person / as in story plots / as in house plots / as in evil plots / as in grave plots.

(*Whispering in Shadows* 152)

It was the first time I saw what crude oil looked like. I watched as the thick liquid spread out, covering more land and drowning small animals in its path.... And so it was that, in a single day, my mother lost her main source of sustenance. However, I think she had lost that land a long time ago, because each season yielded less than the season before. Not unlike the way she and others in the village had gradually lost year after year, the creatures of the river to oil spills, acid rain, gas flares, and who knows what else....

(*Yellow-Yellow* 4)

The traditional means of spiritual, cultural, and economic wholeness and wellness of the Ijaw in Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* and of the Okanagan in Jeanette Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows* is represented in the interrelatedness of humans with other humans, spirits, ancestors, seas, rocks, plants and animals. *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow* are about Okanagan and Nigerian Indigenous peoples whose views of self, community and land define and regulate their socio-economic practices of farming, fishing, and hunting. Deeply opposed to these communal cultures are the capitalist and individualist economic structures that have become

dominant in non-Western societies as a result of colonization and globalization. Both novels are about the struggles of Indigenous peoples to maintain both communal and self-identity under the social, cultural and economic realities defined, controlled and imposed by the dominant capitalist social economy. While *Yellow-Yellow* portrays a Nigerian social economy that gravitates around petro-culture, *Whispering in Shadows* portrays a service and capitalist economy that tries to submerge the traditional subsistence economy of the Okanagan.

Both novels underscore how globalization - with attendant socio-cultural hegemony and industrial activities – fosters the displacement of minority traditional peoples from their ancestral lands. The direct forces of globalization in *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows* are impersonal, invisible, untouchable and even unidentifiable, but they define, negotiate, drive and recycle cultural, economic and social practices into hegemonic patterns that normalize the violence of dislocation and environmental devastation. Urbanization, development, and industrial activities controlled by the global economy often dislocate people and destabilize eco-systems. However, dislocation and slow violence in the novels are not only a product of capitalist labour and resource exploitation practices, but they are also hegemonic weapons by which populations are culturally, economically, and geographically controlled to ensure continued profit for corporations to the detriment of Indigenous populations. Significantly, the violence to traditional systems of subsistence and to the environment as a result of globalization constitute systems that maintain the slow genocide of pan-Indigenous and ethnic minority peoples in Canada and Nigeria respectively. *Yellow-Yellow* portrays how globalization induces cultural change in the Ijaw people through the instrumentality of slow violence. Ijaw adaptive responses to environmental degradation, and their adoption of petro-culture, re-define traditional cultural norms and values. Likewise, *Whispering in Shadows* shows how globalization provokes cultural



change through the imposition of the North American neoliberal wage-labour economy on the Okanagan in the place of Okanagan traditional agro-economy, thereby creating new social and economic exigencies that demand new social and economic adaptations.

In *Slow Violence and The Environmentalism of the Poor* Rob Nixon calls for a reimagining of the concept of violence as it pertains to displacement of marginalized peoples: “We need, I believe, to engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales” (2). Nixon’s perception of environmentally-induced slow violence parallels significant aspects of the critiques embedded in Agary’s and Armstrong’s novels. Adaptations to slow violence, including urban migration and integration into non-traditional wage-labour economy, do not often appear to be violent. Migration to urban spaces is advertised as an opportunistic move for Indigenous peoples to assimilate into the dominant society. Both Penny and Laye are victims of slow violence, and both think of their migrations from their unsustainable and polluted traditional lands as an escape from poverty, as well as from the social and economic dislocation in their respective Indigenous communities. Penny moves to Vancouver to attend college so that she will never have to “pick apples, stamp boxes or clean motels again” (41). Laye, for her part, moves to Port Harcourt to escape from her village, which she describes as “claustrophobic” (17). She says: “the sameness of life in the village would kill me if I did not escape” (10), referring to the traumatizing and destabilizing pollution, as well as the poverty, fighting, and social disorder in the village. Laye and Penny respectively embody traditional Ijaw and Okanagan women who choose to migrate to cities as a result of different experiences of displacement from their ancestral lands. While Laye’s migration is influenced by the poverty and social unrest as a result of the loss of ancestral land from a devastating oil spill,

Penny is forced to migrate to a foreign space because the traditional agronomy of the Okanagan has lost its economic value and can no longer sustain the people within the North American industrial economic system.

Although both women perceive their dislocation to the city in terms of social and economic empowerment for the sake of survival, it later becomes apparent that their economic empowerment coincides with their social, spiritual and bodily impoverishment, because they are dislocated from spiritually-grounded interrelatedness within the community and with the land. Agary's and Armstrong's interpretations of this alienation shows that even though migration can be economically empowering, Indigenous peoples may experience migration as violence, or as a geographic displacement that intrinsically entails various forms of literal and symbolic dispossession, such as cultural, social and spiritual dislocation.

Nixon conceptualizes these forms of displacement in terms of a slow violence that bears significant impact upon human and environmental sustainability: "Attritional catastrophes that overspill clear boundaries in time and space are marked above all by displacements – temporal, geographical, rhetorical, and technological displacements that simplify violence and underestimate, in advance and in retrospect, the human and environmental costs" (7). The "human and environmental costs" of the slow violence caused by displacement are typically borne by minority ethnic, racial, religious, and gendered groups. Nixon contrasts the power of the global economy with that of Global South minorities whose traditional sacred lands are occupied by cherished "kin," which dominant capitalist corporations typically recognizes as "resources." While Nixon describes these minority groups as "long-termers," he classifies the owners of economic capital as "short-termers" (17). While "short-termers" include those who "arrive (with their official landscape maps) to extract, despoil, and depart" (17), "long-termers"

are those who suffer the human and environmental costs of the resource extraction undertaken by the short-termers.

In both *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow* short-termer activity that leads to environmental degradation causes not only the pollution and destruction of eco-systems, but also causes the traumatic cultural, economic, spiritual and material displacement of Indigenous peoples; all of which jeopardize the continued existence of the traditional communities. In fact, Armstrong's and Agary's texts do not entirely emphasize physical death or acts of conventional violence. Rather, events in both novels are built around tensions and critical conditions that put Indigenous peoples at the margins of survival. *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows* portray how the historic subjugation of Niger Deltans and Indigenous peoples, both the Okanagan and other pan-Indigenous communities in North America, are maintained through their traumatic positioning in conditions where death is always felt close by. Such economic and social conditions and conditioning that produce normalized trauma and desperation for survival for marginalized peoples has been poignantly referred to as "*Genocide lent* [slow genocide]" by Yves Sioui Durand (32).

In this chapter, I intend to identify the effects of slow violence that culminate in the cultural, environmental and slow genocide of Indigenous peoples represented in *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow*. I argue that in both novels the coerced displacement of peoples and the pollution of landscapes impoverish and destabilize marginalized communities, and that the effects of displacement transcend economic disempowerment, since the trauma of dislocation destabilizes existential definitions of self and community, and produces spiritual, cultural and social disorientation. This chapter answers calls made by Rob Nixon to consider the social and cultural implications of environmental degradation in order to conceptualize implicit ways of

showing how environmental injustice is as potentially lethal as the physical violence of military genocidal conflict.

The first part of this chapter examines how the effects of slow violence in *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows* culminate in the slow genocide of Indigenous peoples. In order to interpret the consequences of slow violence in the representations of Nigerian and Indigenous peoples, I will broadly analyse the respective world-views that define the spiritually-grounded relations these characters share with community and with the land. Binaebi's assertion that relationships between humans, spirits and non-human nature is founded on moral principles of equity, fairness and sustainability in Ijaw traditions, and Simon Ortiz's argument that the land and people are conceived in Indigenous traditions as inseparable and "are one and the same essential matter of Existence" (xii), emphasize the pre-eminence of the notion of a cosmic bond between self and the land for both traditional African and Indigenous cultures. Understanding that many Indigenous cultures see the self as an integral part of the land underscores the perception that ecocide means genocide for traditional Indigenous peoples. Moreover, if the massacre of the environment has a parallel cultural effect on the humans who are connected to those spaces, *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow*, as I argue, emphasize that ecocide, coupled with its attending social economic dislocations, leads to social, cultural and spiritual dysfunctions that slowly perpetuate the cultural and material genocide of Indigenous peoples.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the human body as a metaphoric representation of the interrelatedness between Indigenous self and land. Rob Nixon's suggests that confronting slow violence requires that "we plot and give figurative shape to formless threats whose fatal repercussions are dispersed across space and time" (10). "The representational challenges," he says, are high, "requiring creative ways of drawing public attention" to lethal violence that

appear to be non-violent (10). Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin propose that postcolonial ecocriticism should respect the “aesthetic function of the literary text while drawing attention to its social and political usefulness” (14). Accordingly, analysis of the symbolism of the body, in relation to the land, and also in response to the exploitation of the forces of globalization, offers ways of interpreting the perpetration and the normalization of slow genocide in the Indigenous populations represented in both *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows*. Penny’s and Laye’s perceptions of their bodies emphasize the interdependence between the Indigenous body and the land.

Agary’s and Armstrong’s texts portray how the Indigenous body is expended in similar ways as the land for the profit interests of global economic powers. One of the ways I interpret the exploitation of Indigenous bodies is in relation to the Indigenous response to slow violence. In response to their exploitation and marginalization, Indigenous peoples in both novels adopt alternative modes of survival, which they often perceive in terms of counter-cultural resistance to globalization. I will analyse how these alternative modes of survival make room for some of the bodies of Indigenous peoples to, both ironically and tragically, reproduce the effects of slow violence against themselves despite the attempt to challenge the hegemonic system that produces such violence in the first place. In *Yellow-Yellow* Ijaw youth take to prostitution, oil bunkery, and vandalism, while in *Whispering in Shadows* Lena engages in prostitution in Vancouver. In both novels, some Indigenous bodies become instruments that gratify the sexual, political and economic interests of those with hegemonic political and economic power. As female bodies are used, raped, and maimed, males are criminalized by the state or killed in the melee of political infighting among estranged militant groups in *Yellow-Yellow*. Individual alternative modes of

survival often entail social behaviour and adaptations that actually foster contemporary forms of slow genocide experienced by Indigenous peoples.

### **Same Old Genocide in Contemporary Forms**

James Daschuk and Dean Neu, both scholars of Canadian and North American Indigenous history, conclude that the pollution of water and food, and the deliberate creation and propagation of famine and diseases, were biological weapons used to cause genocide in Indigenous communities in order to weaken local resistance against colonial appropriation of Indigenous traditional spaces, and to foster the industrial and agricultural enrichment of settler communities. James Daschuk argues that biological weapons such as famine, starvation, and disease were used to induce the migration of Indigenous peoples away from areas rich in agricultural and natural resources to give way for the possession of these territories by settler communities (xii-xiii). He argues that settler communities sponsored the material impoverishment of Indigenous peoples so as to deprive them of socio-economic independence, stability and sustainability (11-13). Dean Neu proposes that “containment on reserves was ultimately a form of reproductive genocide in that the reserve land base was insufficient to sustain either the traditional hunter/gatherer lifestyle or the agrarian lifestyle that the government apparently sought to encourage” (275). Stephen Maher, a Canadian journalist, recently argued that “the ongoing suffering in aboriginal communities is a direct result of centuries of dislocation, starvation and powerlessness, of governments that veered between criminal neglect and wilful ethnic cleansing” (Maher). Deliberate acts of genocide affected Indigenous peoples, but the contemporary reservation and the residential school system have threatened Indigenous communities with deicide, ecocide, and deterritorialization. Despite the abolition of residential

schools in Canada, the Federal government's official apology to Indigenous peoples, and the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the slow genocide of Indigenous peoples remains manifest as a result of the social and cultural effects of dislocation among minority peoples.

Similarly, scholars of the Niger Delta's colonial history agree that colonialism in the region persists, having only changed forms over time. In fact, the environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa consistently argued that the Ogoni, one of the over 40 Niger Delta ethnic groups, experienced genocide as a result of the succession of forms of subjugation under colonialism, which denied the Ogoni people cultural autonomy and the right to self-determination (*A Month* 88). In *Genocide in Nigeria*, Saro-Wiwa criticized British indirect rule for lumping together the Ogoni with the Igbo-dominated eastern region. He maintains that the colonial system should be partly to blame for the ongoing marginalization of the Ogoni (23).

In 1958 crude oil was discovered in commercial quantities at Oloibiri in present day Bayelsa state of Nigeria. After Nigeria got independence from Britain in 1960, the minority oil-rich Niger Delta communities were caught at the centre of political struggles between the major northern and southern ethnic groups and politicians. Saro-Wiwa states, for example, that the Nigerian civil war was a "battle over oil territory [that] left the Ogoni flattened 'like grass in the fight of elephants'" (*A Month* 113). Shell's control of the Nigerian petroleum industry, and its collusion with corrupt Nigerian governments dominated by the majority ethnic groups, has caused the pollution of Niger Delta land, water, and air by oil spills, gas flares, and acid rain (Comfort 233). Environmental degradation in the Niger Delta has rendered the Indigenous subsistence economy, built around farming and fishing, unsustainable (UNDP 28). Oil spills from Shell, as well as from other oil multinationals operating in the Niger Delta, have led to the

desecration of spiritualized traditional spaces, starvation, sickness, and death. But, according to Temitope Oriola, as anger, violence, and militant groups began to spread among the marginalized Deltans, the Nigerian military subsequently criminalized and declared war against the militants in order to bring “peace” and “order” to the region (41).

The Niger Delta has experienced a number of changing modes of colonial oppression and dispossession. The double colonial marginalization of the Niger Delta - under the British and under the Igbo-led Eastern region - as a result of indirect colonial rule, is linked to the post-colonial ethnic-biased practices of the Nigerian government and the forceful appropriation of Niger Delta lands by a cohort of Western capitalists and the Nigerian military. In *Genocide in Nigeria* Saro-Wiwa underscores how slow violence in Ogoni land is perpetrated in contemporary times by Shell’s racist and ecocidal practices. Saro-Wiwa characterizes Shell as a colonial multinational that enjoys the backing of the Nigerian military (81). In a similar critique of African neo-colonization, Feghabo Charles, discussing comparisons between different forms of African eco-activism, argues that Niger Delta peoples have barely imagined an end to colonialism, and that colonial administration in the Niger Delta was only formally depoliticized in 1960. He argues that the multinational companies and their white expatriates are the contemporary colonial power exploiting the Niger Delta (49). Accordingly, resource extraction and the attending injustices of political and racial marginalization in the Niger Delta create the maintenance of social unrest, violence, and trauma, which perpetuates slow genocide in traditional Niger Delta communities.

### **Indigenous Relations with the Land and the Genocide of Dislocation**



Rob Nixon interprets the dislocation of poor, ethnic and racial minorities in terms of various shades of displacement: temporal, geographical, rhetorical, and technological. According to Nixon, these forms of violence are seemingly non-lethal “displacements that simplify violence and underestimate, in advance and in retrospect, the human and environmental costs [of resource extraction] as places are rendered irretrievable to those who once inhabited them” (7). Nixon is sensitive to the multidimensionality of the idea of place with regard to Indigenous and traditional African cosmology. Places may physically be rendered irretrievable as a result of the pollution caused by oil spills, as is represented in *Yellow-Yellow*. However, in Nixon’s analysis, and also in the traditional animist cosmology that is represented in the Indigenous and African traditions in *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows*, place is perceived as an interconnected realm of spiritual, physical, and socio-cultural space. Nixon argues that the injustice of displacement and environmental dispossession be conceptualized beyond the material disempowerment of the loss of physical land:

Change is constant, but the pace of change is not. Hence the temporal contests over how to sustain, regenerate, exhaust, or obliterate the landscape as resource become critical.

More than material wealth is here at stake: imposed official landscapes typically discount spiritualized vernacular landscapes, severing webs of accumulated cultural meaning and treating the landscape as if it were uninhabited by the living, the unborn, and the animate deceased. (17)

The global economic powers that Nixon refers to as “short-termers” are foreign to the deep cultural and spiritual significance of landscapes to those indigenous to the land. Short-termers are concerned about wealth creation, development and profit making, and minimize and euphemize the impact of ecocide. This limits the violence of environmental devastation to the realm of

material loss, while, at the same time, it amounts to the traumatizing rupture of the spiritual relations Indigenous peoples share with the land. The connection between ecocide and human spiritual death is further clarified by Simon Ortiz's definition of "Native identity." Ortiz, in *Speaking for Generations*, argues that "speaking for the sake of the land and the people means speaking for the inextricable relationship and interconnection between them" (xii). He pursues the argument by stating:

Land and people are interdependent. In fact, they are one and the same essential matter of Existence. They cannot be separated and delineated into singular entities. If anything is most vital, essential, and absolutely important in Native cultural philosophy, it is this concept of interdependence: the fact that without land there is no life, and without a responsible social and cultural outlook by humans, no life-sustaining land is possible. (xii)

The perception that humans and the land are "one and the same essential matter of existence" suggests that for all peoples, but especially minority peoples in precarious positions, ecocide translates into a significant threat to their survival. Kenneth M. Roemer posits that the idea of community, for most Indigenous cultures, is grounded in interconnectedness to everything (13). Joy Porter, in her "Historical and Cultural Contexts to Native American Literature," argues that in most traditional Indigenous cultures, there is a "sense of the interconnectedness and relationship between all things, between animals, lands, peoples and their language, and a requirement to seek individual, communal, and environmental balance" (43).

Similarly, African writers and ecocritics also use spiritualized relations with the land to emphasize the interconnectedness of environmental health to human economic, spiritual, cultural, and material survival. Saro-Wiwa, for instance, argues in *Genocide in Nigeria* that, in

similar ways to many other Indigenous peoples, the Ogoni, a Niger Delta ethnic group, believe that “rivers and streams do not only provide water for life – for bathing, drinking, etc.; they do not only provide fish for food, they are also sacred and are bound up intricately with the life of the community, of the entire Ogoni nation” (12-13). Likewise, Kaine Agary’s and Jeannette Armstrong’s novels incorporate traditional Pan-Indigenous and African cosmologies, which conceive of humans, the land and the metaphysical realms as interrelated and functioning as one entity. Indigenous characters in both novels often relate to the land as they would relate to kin.

In *Yellow-Yellow*, Laye’s village is gradually dislocated from its ancestral lands due to the slow violence of an oil spill. Laye and her friends subsequently find an alternative space where they maintain their relations with the land. They use the island of Wokiri as a place of emotional and spiritual stability. Laye thinks of this island as a special place of pleasure and comfort, and sees it as the best place to take Sergio, her Spanish guest, for a visit. Apart from the sense of security and tranquillity of spirit and body that she feels on the island, she is able to maintain her cultural identity and agency when Sergio tries to make unwanted advances towards her. She says: “he did not insist when I stopped his hand from exploring under the skirt of my dress” (27). Sergio does not force himself on her, but he does realize that his actions go against her traditional values, which forbid sexual relations outside marriage. She imposes her traditional values on Sergio despite her own emotional attachment to him. Laye’s resistance to Sergio’s advances on Wokiri is also noteworthy since it is the only place where Laye exerts any form of control or influence over masculine power. In contrast, after Laye relocates to Port Harcourt, her agency is reduced as she is unable to control her own sexuality in her relationship with Admiral and Sergio. The juxtaposition, on the one hand, of Laye’s self-control over her emotions and the actions of Sergio in Wokiri, and, on the other hand, the uncontested yielding of her body under

the manipulation of Admiral and Sergio after she is dislocated to Port Harcourt, reflects the socio-cultural disorientation that Laye experiences after she is disconnected from the spiritualized space of Wokiri.

Nevertheless, Laye maintains the aspects of Ijaw traditions that value equity of time and space between humans and non-humans. Binaebi Benatari's analysis of the religious history of the Ijaw asserts that Ijaw traditions recognize and respect the equitable sharing of time in the occupation of the land by humans and other beings. The Ijaw belief that the earth is, what Benatari calls, one "unified system" (par. 19), significantly parallels Ortiz's pan-Indigenous conception of the inseparability of the land and humans. It also parallels Laye's sensitivity to the connection between time and space. Laye's understanding of the spirituality of the land, and of Ijaw conceptions of time and space is emphasized when she visits the Lagos Bar beach and sees a man "challenging the angry voice of the ocean" (92). A surprised Laye remarks: "The rivers and the oceans were the resting place of sundry spirits, and when they came out at night, they did not like to be disturbed" (92). Laye's understanding of the laws concerning the use of time and space, which guides relations between the human, the non-human, and the terrestrial, reflects the traditional African cosmology upon which Ijaw traditions are founded. In Laye's understanding, humans may occupy the rivers during the day while sundry spirits rest, but the night is the domain of other beings who share the space. Neither the river nor its spirits desire to be disturbed at that time.

Laye's understanding of the land is similar to Penny's relationship with the land in *Whispering in Shadows*. Penny is sensitive to the animate world around her: the trees, the birds, and the interdependence of all life on the land. Penny's visit to Vancouver Island embodies her identification and spiritual connections with the land:

She slowly lets herself down next to the tent, closes her eyes and draws in a deep breath. For the first time in long months, she can feel her whole body relax as a familiar lethargy takes over .... Look up! It's the tree moving! She leans so far backward, looking up at the swaying tops of the trees above her, she almost falls backward. She watches them nod toward each other, whispering. They're talking! An overwhelming emotion washes over her. She can feel her throat tighten and her chest hurt.... She leans close to the tree, her cheek pressed sideways against the trunk and closes her eyes. Her words are barely audible in the still air. The sounds of her language mixing with the soft movement of ferns, the whispering of branches and the sound of birds overhead. (97-98)

Penny finally speaks: "Ancient one. Thank you for your welcome" (98). Despite the fact that the traditional territory that Penny visits is not Okanagan, she still experiences a familiar sense of wholeness, reunion and warmth - an experience of home-coming - when she enters the forest. She understands the language of the trees, and recognizes their movements as expressions of greetings.

Penny's sensitivity to the spiritual embodiment of nature is central to the pan-Indigenous traditional cosmology foregrounded by the representations of Indigenous culture in the novel. The Okanagan inhabit a cosmology of interrelatedness between the four elements of nature: earth, air, fire, and water. The Okanagan First Peoples' traditions refuse to allow a fragmentation of nature into four distinct parts. In *Syilx Nation: Okanagan First Peoples*, Okanagan elders assert:

Our Knowledge of the way the physical world 'appears' is founded on how these elements are 'related' or 'bound' together to be the living 'earth' which makes life possible. The Earth is not just the land that we live on. We as living things are 'earth' in

that we are made up of the very same foundational elements.... ‘Earth,’ to the Okanagan people, isn’t just dirt to walk on here, or piles of rock there. Air is more than just being there and keeping us alive, Fire does more than keep us warm and water isn’t just something to drink or swim in. (Syilx)

The notion that all the elements of the world are “bound together” to form a “living earth” is central to the principle of interrelatedness underscored in *Whispering in Shadows*.

Representations of the connection of the traditional Okanagan to the land are such that even outside of their sacred traditional lands, the Okanagan still feel a spiritual familial connection to the land. Penny explains her experience in the forest on Vancouver Island: “It feels the same as a relative holding me. Soothing me.... The tree. It’s alive. Aware. It touched me” (99). To the Okanagan culture represented in Armstrong’s novel, the land is identified through its provision of parental care, sustenance and protection. In accordance with traditional Okanagan and pan-Indigenous belief, *Whispering in Shadows* portrays how every ‘life’ that makes up the land has a spirit, and is interrelated with humans. Humans are therefore not superior to the land, but rather the land nourishes and provides for humans in a family-based relationship that is dependent upon mutual interests. This pan-Indigenous world-view is expressed in the novel during a meeting attended by Penny at the friendship centre. An Indigenous man from Bolivia asks: “We have one agenda, no? *Pache Mama*. We are hers like the flowers. We are only healthy if *Pache Mama* is. This is what our political and economic agendas strive for. It is *Pache Mama* yearning to see all her flowers bloom healthy” (33). According to the pan-Indigenous perspective represented here, Mother Earth seeks the protection and survival of all that is connected to the natural and spiritual universe: rocks, rivers, salmons, cedar trees, ravens, and humans alike. The depth of Indigenous

connectedness to Mother Earth explains their unfeigned solidarity in the protection and conservation of other beings.

Aside from the spirituality of Indigenous connections to the land, the Okanagan and Ijaw cultures represented in both novels depict how relations with the land are equally significant to the interdependence between family and community members. Farming and fishing practices foster familial and communal collaborations between Indigenous peoples in the novels.

Armstrong shows how farming brings together all of Penny's family, where Juliana, Penny's mother, speaks with her own mother:

I wonder how many years our people have gathered, right here, and dug roots.

Thousands? Look at Gramma, she's almost ninety and look at you. You're over sixty.

Every year, she has come here and so has her mother and grandmother and so have you, and now me and I'm almost forty. But what about Penny, my last baby? (133)

From great-grandmother Tupa to great-granddaughter Penny, four generations of an Okanagan family collaborate to live off of the land. But that familial collaboration on the land is not a mere subsistence partnership, it is also permeated with cultural and spiritual significance. Indigenous philosophy, wisdom, cultural knowledge, and history inherited from past generations by Tupa are passed down to the younger generations during collaborative work on the land. Penny reminisces on what Tupa told her as a child after climbing up the hill to see the sunrise one morning:

The world is new. Today we are here, but the shadows follow us in the bright of day.

Take care to wrap the light around you. To let it keep you warm. To greet it and give thanks each new day. (18)

Tupa's teachings are significant to Penny's spiritual and cultural education. They remain reference points for cultural reorientation whenever the effects of globalization disorient the younger generations that come after Tupa. For instance, Lena, Penny's elder sister becomes culturally and spiritually dislocated after moving away from the traditional land and her family. When she returns, however, she remembers Tupa's teachings about the warmth that the land and family offer: "[Tupa] used to say to wrap the light from the rising sun around you because the shadows from the dream world followed you everywhere.... Somewhere along the line, the shadows took over. I forgot how to wrap the light of each new day around me" (275). Lena remembers that wholeness and spiritual health can come from a connection with nature, and she also recognizes that her disorientation is due to her disconnection from her family: "It was family that I was really missing, I guess. The warmth of it. Like arms holding you. Being part of it" (272). But she further points out: "Maybe it's more than family. Maybe it's our community together in a certain way on land which makes us a full person" (273). Lena's return to the Okanagan and to what she recognizes as "the warmth of family" and community underscores Okanagan cosmology, which considers the self to be an integral part of the whole of the community and land (in their material and spiritual dimensions). Apart from the spiritual significance of the land, its ability to unite families and to maintain cultural values remains central to pan-Indigenous sustainability.

In similar ways, Agary represents Indigenous self-identity in terms of the interrelatedness between the land and the human community. Laye loves Wokiri, but her love for the land is paralleled by love for a communal life based on interdependence and sharing. After Laye is 'displaced-without-moving' as a result of the pollution of her ancestral land and the violence that results from it, she ruminates over her childhood in which crude oil was not a reality. Laye's



narration reveals an interweaving of friendship, communal bonding, cultural knowledge and spiritual consciousness about the land:

My mind tried to hold on to the images of laughter from my childhood: the moonlit nights that wrapped us as children, when we sang, clapped and danced through games, pretending to tell each other's fortunes, naming the species of food or dodging possession by a water spirit. The days I spent with my mother on her farm before oil finally swallowed it up. The day, when I was thirteen years old, that I took off with the girls in my age group to Wokiri .... We spent that day creating permanent designs on each other's bodies. We looked on with anticipation as we waited our turns and watched shaky, inexperienced hands try to reproduce the butterfly patterns identifying Kolokuma Ijaw women that we had seen on our mothers' stomachs.... We laughed as some cowardly girls abandoned the ritual after the first cut into their skin. (41)

The initiation of Ijaw girls into the cultural practices and rituals of Ijaw female identity shows the cultural fabric of the community in interaction with the land. The family farm, which primarily offers economic sustainability, is also a place of familial interconnection and bonding for Laye and her mother, just like it is for Penny's family in *Whispering in Shadows*. In similar ways to Armstrong's portrayal of four generations of Okanagan women who live interdependently off the land, Agary portrays an Ijaw mother and daughter whose economic activity of farming translates into loving memories of oneness and community.

The deep spiritual connections between characters in *Whispering in Shadows* and in *Yellow-Yellow* emphasize how the Indigenous peoples of Nigeria and Canada experience slow violence as lethal violence. The texts represent slow violence in terms of the spiritual, economic, social, and cultural dislocation arising from continuous environmental damage to Indigenous

traditional spaces where wholeness is defined by individual interdependence upon community and upon the land. In both texts, modernity's industrial activities “feed” on life that occupies the land, which is objectified in utilitarian terms as resources: crude oil and timber. Subsequently, the traditional Indigenous conceptions of wholeness and communal identity are fractured by multifaceted dislocations: loss of the land through logging, oil extraction and pollution, or loss of land's value as a result of the non-traditional industrialization of agriculture. Nixon argues that “environmental asset-stripping” cannot be defined without considering the cultural, spiritual, and historic perception of land by the affected communities (18). In this regard, whereas Laye's ancestral land, and Penny's traditional land, remains officially owned by them, the sustainable experience of life on these traditional lands – an experience that embodies social, cultural, spiritual, and historic significance – is lost along with the economic sustainability that agricultural practices on the land brings. As Laye argues:

The day my mother's farmland was overrun by crude oil was the day her dream for me started to wither, but she carried on watering it with hope. The black oil that spilled that day swallowed my mother's crops and unravelled the threads that held together her fantasies for me. (10)

Bibi and Laye's traditional use of the land, which represents the historical and spiritual links between them and their ancestors, is submerged in crude oil, forcing them out of the spiritual space that their relationship to the land represents. Environmental degradation as a result of pollution disempowers the Ijaw economically, but it also results in anger, violence and crime, all of which escalate into devastating infighting among community members or mass urban migration. To Laye, the “images [of violence, moral decadence, poverty and socio-economic stagnation] darkened the canvas of [her] village life” (40).

In *Whispering in Shadows* Penny and her sister Lena are dislocated from the land not through pollution, as in *Yellow-Yellow*, but through changes in economic policies that causes their family and Indigenous community to lose the agro-economic value of their traditional land, and that displaces them to a geographic and spiritual position outside of the cosmology of ancestral land. *Whispering in Shadows* offers new ways of seeing the violence of the literal loss of land; not only in terms of ecocide, spiritual and cultural dislocation, but also as economic dislocation. In contrast to other Indigenous communities represented in the novel, the Okanagan people are not dispossessed of their land through logging or by means of institutionalized enslavement (although other communities are directly affected by logging in the novel), but they are displaced, all the same, by the fact that Canada's capitalist economic system brings changes to their economic and social realities, so that the hitherto sustainable communal production and dependence on land is no longer viable or sustainable. Penny asserts:

What I've come to understand is: if you don't have "capital" to start with or borrowing power or business education or a few generations of merchants in your background, you just can't start anything. I'm no different. But no welfare for me. My family always worked or made do with a little farming and trapping. I resist welfare like my mom does. She always makes things to sell for extra cash. And we grew what we ate. She still does, even after she lost my dad. But it's just too hard that way. (58)

Penny recognizes that the socio-economic conditioning of most Indigenous peoples to a culture of dependence on welfare is a part of the globalized functioning of a capitalist economy that marginalizes and exploits minorities and indigenous populations. Although the land is not physically taken from the Okanagan in *Whispering in Shadows*, in the same ways that the environmental pollution of the air, land, and sea gradually and continually reduces the

productivity and viability of agriculture in the Niger Delta in *Yellow-Yellow*, contemporary globalization as represented in *Whispering in Shadows* gradually and continually reduces the value and sustainability of Indigenous subsistence agriculture. Thus, whether peoples' lands are forcefully taken from them or they leave because the land can no longer assure subsistence as a result of pollution or change in socio-economic system, dislocation in all its forms produces a spiritual, cultural, and material loss of the land, as well as a symbolic loss of identification with the land.

Scholars of pan-Indigenous cultures have criticized the idea that urban migration of Indigenous peoples leads to an absolute loss of culture, or a disorientation from traditional ways of being. Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen argue that “[u]rban Indigenous peoples have resisted expectations of assimilation by building communities in and beyond urban areas and by reformulating Western institutions and practices to support their particular Indigenous identities. Indigeneity survives, adapts, and innovates in modern cities” (2). Urbanized Indigenous peoples do possess their own relations with the land that are still spiritually and culturally connected to their Indigenous self-identity. Nevertheless, *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow* show that although cultural resistance and resilience is realizable by Indigenous and ethnic minorities in the city, the hegemony of non-traditional urban values and cultures are so disorienting that Indigenous characters are often pre-occupied with trying to survive in the city, and are thereby influenced by dominant values that disconnect them from their traditional spiritual connections to family, community, and the land.

The concept of cultural “forgetting” and “remembrance” in reference to migration from traditional spaces is emphasized in *Whispering in Shadows* and in *Yellow-Yellow*. In both texts the city is portrayed as a site of possibilities where one is supposedly able to achieve financial

success. Both Lena and Laye integrate into the city and then “forget,” or give up, traditional ways of living on the land while seeking social mobility in the city. While their disorientation in the city is represented as a cultural forgetting, the images of economic and social progress identified with urban migration are portrayed in both novels as an illusion. Lena remembers how she was attracted to the city: “It was like I was star struck or something. I always dreamed of going places when I was a kid. Seeing things. The world seemed so exciting and big. I used to read the magazines we picked up from the junkyard for the john. The pictures in them always showed places and things we never had. And then when we got into Vancouver....” (271). Lena’s focus on the pictures misleadingly shows the unpolluted and embellished parts of Vancouver, as it reveals “the places and things” Lena wishes to have, but not the poverty and struggle more common to minority peoples. Lena’s son Toby emphasizes the places and things in Vancouver that Lena would wish “never to have had”: “Toby thinks about Vancouver. What he remembers most is the sounds of the sirens at night. Every night. And the piss stink on Hastings where they stayed before he got taken. He doesn’t want to think of the rest” (264). Toby remarks: “I sure hope Aunt Penny’s not staying on Hastings. It’s too dirty there and some guys get knifed, you know” (264). The reality of Vancouver disrupts the feelings created by the magazine images. The Vancouver in which Lena lives is actually polluted, dangerous, and unhealthy. The illusion of a better life attracts her to the city where she ‘forgets,’ becomes culturally dislocated, economically disempowered and sexually exploited.

In *Yellow-Yellow*, Laye is also influenced by media representations of the promising opportunities that are available to people from oil-producing Niger Delta communities: “On one of those rare occasions that we got good reception on the radio, we heard that the oil companies had educational scholarships for Niger Delta indigenes” (11). Laye migrates to Port Harcourt

based on political propaganda disseminated through the radio: “I imagined that I could learn a skill like sewing through one of the skills-acquisition programmes organized by the government agency set up to address the development needs of the Niger Delta. None of the programmes [including the scholarships] had reached my village since the agency [Niger Delta Development Commission] was formed, but I was sure that being in Port Harcourt would give me a better chance of getting my little piece of the national cake” (43). Laye, in similar ways to Lena, is misled into moving to the city by the idea that it will offer her an opportunity to benefit from the economic possibilities or the free skills-acquisition programmes publicized by the media.

Lena, of course, is not able to enjoy the idealized vision of Vancouver. On the contrary, she becomes a homeless, drug-addicted prostitute after her boyfriend loses his job shortly after their arrival in Vancouver. Vancouver does not provide a better world for Lena, but rather it dislocates her from the spiritual wholeness she receives from the symbolic ritual of watching the sunrise, and of wrapping herself with its light. Her migration to a culturally-hegemonic urban space precedes her loss of connections with her land and her family.

Laye similarly discovers that her belief that moving to Port Harcourt will provide her with the opportunity of receiving her own piece of the “national cake” is based on propaganda. When Laye arrives in Port Harcourt, she receives advice and guidance from Sisi and Lolo, but neither Sisi nor Lolo tells Laye about any possibility of government-sponsored skills-acquisition programmes or scholarships because, in reality, they did not exist. She gets a job as a hotel receptionist, which empowers her financially, but her work also exposes her to the hegemonic male-dominated petro-culture that influences Port Harcourt women.

While in Port Harcourt Laye “forgets” her traditional values relating to sex and dependence. Laye’s narration of her experience with Sergio in Wokiri - how she prevents him

from making advances towards her - dramatizes the Ijaw traditional belief of the sanctity of sex. Laye also points out how, historically, Ijaw women have been economically self-sufficient, and how they have not depended on men for subsistence: “The wife would ... fish, earn a living, and help to feed the family.... Those were the days when the Ijaw woman could ignore the nature of the Ijaw man because she had a means of earning a living and providing the needs of her children” (40). Ijaw women do not bother about their husbands’ inability to provide for the family. Even when slow violence displaces the women from a position of economic self-sufficiency, the women, Laye’s mother for instance, raise their children without help from men. But after Laye moves to Port Harcourt, she is taught by her colleague Emem to rely on the “comfort” that men can offer. In Agary’s representation, dependence on men for financial comfort and on casual sex for pleasure constitute major aspects of the non-traditional mentality among Niger Delta women and girls in Port Harcourt. Emem admonishes Laye on her behaviour towards Admiral: “You better open your eyes. The man is loaded; he can make you very comfortable” (128). Emem also tells Laye of her many boyfriends: “some she dated just because they gave her money. Others were merely for physical pleasure (128). Subsequently, Laye’s integration into the dominant city culture leads her to forget her cultural values and traditions. She stops depending on her salary; she lives off the money she gets from Admiral who, in return, sexually exploits Laye. Her disconnection from the land in her migration from a traditional cultural space, in similar ways to Lena’s migration from the Okanagan, contributes significantly to her cultural dislocation.

Essentially, the traditional views of the Ijaw and the Okanagan recognize that connectedness to traditional land, family, and community is important to an individual’s emotional, spiritual, and social stability, as disconnections from the land and from community

contributes to cultural forgetting. The Indigenous traditions portrayed in Agary's and Armstrong's novels are grounded on the connectedness and the interdependence of all of existence; they conceive of the self as integral to the land, and the land as a holistic image for the self. Self exists as a result of land on which it is born, and as a result of the community that gives birth to it. Agary's and Armstrong's representations of displacement contest dominant perceptions of the land by showing that the land embodies meaning and identity that encompasses culture, social, personal and communal existence, and that ecocide destabilizes all the significant facets of both environmental and human existence. The destruction of eco-systems is experienced as the destabilization of spiritual, cultural and economic systems, and ultimately constitutes threats to the material sustainability of the Indigenous Niger-Delta and Indigenous peoples in both novels.

### **Slow Violence and the Indigenous Body**

Foucault's notion of bio-politics argues that normalized violence is realized by the capitalist social economy's use of the body of marginalized peoples (26). Foucault, arguing that the body is directly manipulated by those in power for political purposes, asserts: "power relations have an immediate hold upon it [the body]; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (25). For Foucault, the body as a political investment ultimately becomes "a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body" (26). Subjection of the body may not warrant physical coercion, for according to Foucault, "there may be a 'knowledge' of the body... a mastery of its forces that is more than the ability to conquer [it]: this knowledge and this mastery constitute what might be called the political technology of the body" (549). Through the notion of the "micro-physics of power,"



Foucault explains the functionality of the politico-economic system that exploits and uses the body as bio-materials that meet political ends:

The study of this micro-physics presupposes that the power exercised on the body is conceived not as property, but as strategy, that its effects of domination are attributed not to “appropriation,” but to dispositions, maneuvers, tactics, techniques, functionings; that one should decipher in it a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity, rather than a privilege that one might possess. (550)

The systems of economic and political power may directly use, invest, train or torture bodies for economic or political purposes, as *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow* portray, but Foucault also suggests that the body may not be likened to a simply possessed property of those in power. He suggests that the socio-political conditioning under which the body is subjected is a technique that is both in conflict and in negotiation with the choices and desires of the populations to meet the political and economic ends of those in power. For Foucault: “power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who ‘do not have it’; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them” (550). Foucault illustrates how the hegemony and entanglement of the socio-economic policies of the global society is intensified and perpetuated through desire, ambition and agency that modify social behaviours and relationships in ways that manipulatively “invests” people for the sake of economic growth and progress. Foucault recognizes, however, that those who are being used in this manner still have a sense of agency, as they are able to recognize and resist manipulation, albeit in a struggle that entails continuous colonization and decolonization from the constant entanglement of dominant hegemonic values and culture.

Foucault's elaboration of the functioning of hegemonic power by which peoples' bodies are manipulated in line with political and economic interests is analogous to how the violence caused by globalization is dramatized in Agary's and Armstrong's texts. The representation of Indigenous self-conception in both novels does not simply reiterate the interrelatedness between self, land, and community, but uses the human body to represent the deep violence against massacred trees, desecrated rivers, and land. Both novels show how violence committed against the land is written on the human mind and body.

Agary uses Laye's body and its interaction with the polluted river to represent the malfunctioning of the Indigenous environmental order as a result of environmental degradation. Armstrong, for her part, uses Penny's Okanagan beliefs to emphasize how ecocide can be represented in terms of the Indigenous body. Accordingly, Penny conceives of the resources, the rocks and the minerals mined and drained from the land, as that of her own blood. Penny's description of the land's resources as her own blood symbolizes the depth of Indigenous familial relationship with the land. Analogously, after Penny is interviewed by a US immigration agent, she broods with rage over the agents' racist questioning of her right to cross the Canadian-American border. Asked "how much [Indigenous] blood" she has, Penny retorts:

I'm full of blood. Just cut me and see. I'll spill out onto the floor. Maybe spatter some on your smirking face! I am full of the blood that moves up from the ground you stand on. The very minerals your house sits on travels through my veins and will be in the veins of all my relatives for generations to come! I have lots of blood in me. A red line that moves like a river roaring over the falls at my grandparents home, harnessed to feed the power lighting your office. A river you will not stop no matter how many dams you build, no matter where you divert it. I have a lot of blood. Who took yours? (194)

Penny sees the solid and liquid minerals of the earth in terms of the Okanagan blood that marks her identity, as well as those of future generations. Just like blood, the minerals carry her identity; she relates to them, she feels them like she feels the blood running through her veins. The sense of kinship, identity, and sustainability that blood symbolically represents dramatizes the indispensability of the land to the traditional Indigenous people. The imagery that suggests that electricity in North America is powered by Indigenous blood contests utilitarian exploitation of traditional water spaces for hydro-energy production. Penny's metaphors describe the proximity of Indigenous people to land, and portray the gravity of slow violence, ultimately reflecting the traumatizing impact of slow violence on the Okanagan self. Penny's interpretation of her blood as the rivers and dams, juxtaposed with the connections made by Perreault between the use of poisonous chemicals for apple farming and the cancer that eventually attacks Penny (Par. 8), shows how life or death are intertwined with the health of the land. Haladay states that in Armstrong's text "[w]hen the land is neglected and sickens, people sicken as well, not only physically, but psychically and spiritually" (43).

*Yellow-Yellow*, like *Whispering in Shadows*, portrays the interdependence between Indigenous traditional cultures and their ancestral lands through the representation of the female body as synonymous with the land. While Penny's blood is represented as the waters and minerals of the Indigenous land, *Yellow-Yellow* represents the ways in which humans are in an existential circle with the environment through Laye's narration of the connections between her body and the land:

How many more times could I bear the pain like a hundred razor blades slashing my private part because the river water that washed it was the same water that received the waste rejected by my body in its attempt to cleanse itself? The water that flowed with

streaks of blue, purple, and red, as drops of oil escaped from the pipelines that moved the wealth from beneath my land and into the pockets of the select few who ruled Nigeria was the same water I drank. (39)

Sunny Awhefeada states that this excerpt reflects “‘a cul-de-sac’ in every ramification of the villagers’ fractured existence.... The vivid narrative slant of the story opens the reader’s eyes to the squalor, extent of river pollution, and how wretched the villagers’ lives are. Ironically, what causes the villagers’ abject poverty is a source of wealth for the ruling class who continue to pillage the nation’s resources” (102). However, Laye’s account of her body significantly demonstrates the interrelatedness that exists between her and the land. Laye drinks water from the river and the water washes her internal system and flows out as urine into the same river. In Agary’s representation, the Ijaw have a strong spiritual relationship with the “mother spirits” of the rivers (178). Symbolically, the river itself, as “a mother,” washes Laye, nourishes her, and takes away her bodily waste. But the river is desecrated by the oil spill. Consequently, Laye describes the character of the river’s water in terms of “a hundred razor blades” that inflict pain upon the body (39). Ecocide directly shapes the character of the river, so that the river, instead of nourishing and refreshing this ethnic minority character, brings suffering, poisoning and death to her. Laye talks about the painful effects of the polluted water on skin, but does not mention the more catastrophic effects of the polluted water on human health when taken into the body. The diseases caused by the consumption of water from the river are indeed unmentionable. As Peter C. Nwilo and Olusegun T. Badejo state:

Many villages near oil installations, even when there has been no recent spill, an oily sheen can be seen on the water, which in fresh water areas is usually the same water that the people living there use for drinking and washing. In April 1997, samples taken from

water used for drinking and washing by local villagers were analysed in the U.S. A sample from Luawii, in Ogoni, where there had been no oil production for four years, had 18 ppm of hydrocarbons in the water, 360 times the level allowed in drinking water in the European Union (E.U.). A sample from Ukpeleide, Ikwerre, contained 34 ppm, 680 times the E.U. standard. (47)

This analysis, in comparison with Laye's narration of the effects of oil pollution of rivers on skin, shows how the environmental devastation characterizes a lethal violence on both the land and on the human self. The river is violated and wounded as a result of an oil spill, so that rather than being soothing and refreshing it inflicts pain and poisons the body that depends on it.

In as much as Agary and Armstrong metaphorically represent the relations and the bond between Indigenous land and body, they also portray how both the land and the Indigenous body act as sites for capitalist exploitation. The novels represent the institutionalized system whereby those in power exploit, invest, and discard both the land and the people on the land. Foucault's idea of the investment of the body and Roxanne Rimstead's notion of the used and worn-out body suggest how the bodies and minds of dispossessed Indigenous peoples can be seen as manipulated investments of the powers behind globalization. Rimstead's analysis of the representation of the transgenerational "using up" of Inuit women through their struggles to adapt to western ideals of progress in Gabrielle Roy's *La Riviere sans repos* characterizes the idea of the symbolic exploitative use of the body by the powers of globalization. Rimstead posits: "in this book ... women's poverty is narrated in the context of the economic and cultural disenfranchisement of the Inuit in Canada. It is in this sense that I refer to the Inuit as 'used people,' implying exploitation. Even though 'used' is the 'faux ami' of 'usée' (worn out, used up), the novel develops the themes of fatigue and exploitation side by side" (69). Rimstead's

elaboration of the thematic significance of *usée* offers a vocabulary for describing the significance of the capitalist economy that exploitatively drives and shapes contemporary social and legal systems, and which ‘invests’ Indigenous bodies in accordance with targeted capitalist priorities. Similar to Rimstead’s argument about the Inuk experience of globalization that predisposes them to exploitation and fatigue, Indigenous peoples, particularly women, in *Whispering in Shadows* and in *Yellow-Yellow* are “used up,” “worn out,” and “invested” for the sexual, economic and political interests of those who hold power. The act of being used up suggests a gradual and continuous disappearance of the material existence of what is being used, and so provides explicit representation of the notions of slow violence and slow genocide in both novels. Rimstead’s term offers imaginative ways of interpreting the manipulative conditioning of human bodies and minds to systems of work, trade, and belief, which ultimately interfere with their own human and environmental sustainability.

Both novels represent silence as an immediate indicator of the trauma that affects Indigenous peoples as a result of slow violence. In *Whispering in Shadows*, characters are often left without words to describe their psychological trauma. Penny is enraged by the pain of a Nitnat chief whose community is dispossessed of its land and ancestral space: “She nods. Feeling his rage. His grief for what lies ahead. His frustration. Something moves inside her. The anger wells up inside her. She wants to smash something. She can’t even speak. She just looks at him” (120). Penny’s confusion and silencing is exacerbated by her perceived powerlessness to stop the irretrievable loss of the cultural heritage of the Nitnat. The paradox of her feelings and her subsequent inaction shows her deep trauma.

Similarly, in *Yellow-Yellow* Bibi feels deeply traumatized and psychologically injured. She withdraws into silence after her land is submerged in crude oil. Laye, unable to understand

her mother's strange attitude after her return from the farm, states: "I tried to imagine what could have happened that left her void of words. My mother never fought, and she did not look like she was injured in any way, but when she was upset, she got very quiet" (3). In both texts, silence functions as a response to trauma, because, for victims of violence, "silence can often communicate traumatic messages as powerfully as words" (Ancharoff 263). The parallels between trauma resulting from the experience of physical violence and trauma as a result of slow violence are evident in Laye's assessment of her mother's change of behaviour. Bibi's traumatized look shows the "scars" of violence and injury. Bibi's experience of violence seems to be non-lethal, and the wounds are invisible, but she shows the symptoms of one who has been wounded after a fight: she is traumatized into silence. Like the tendency of combat trauma victims to be speechless after their experience, Bibi and Penny are both silenced through their experiences with slow violence.

While silence often characterizes a momentary reaction to the shock of slow violence, post-traumatic reorientation constitutes the long-term effects of slow violence. In *Whispering in Shadows* long-term effects of slow violence often translate into familial fragmentation, alienation from community, and an escape from the traumatizing experience of dislocation through drug abuse. In response to slow violence and dislocation, twenty-first century pan-Indigenous youths represented in the novel turn to drugs and or prostitution. They are relegated to precarious living conditions on the land, or integrated into the individualist wage-labour economy of North America. But while pan-Indigenous peoples in *Whispering in Shadows* do not resort to violence despite being consistently oppressed and traumatized, *Yellow-Yellow* portrays, on the contrary, how in spite of the oppression, surveillance and devastating experiences of military attacks upon Niger Deltans, the victims of slow violence are entangled in corruption, violence and crime while

seeking to survive the effects of dislocation. Agary's representation of the criminalized social behaviour of the male Ijaw youth shows that their reactions are post-traumatic responses to overwhelming acts of injustice. Laye states:

Sometimes, when I would sit outside with boys and girls in my age group, we would listen to the radio, and sometimes we would hear an Ijaw person, living in Port Harcourt or Lagos, speaking about how the oil companies had destroyed our Niger Delta with impunity. They would discuss how the Ijaws and other ethnic groups were suffering and even dying while the wealth of their soil fed others.... These broadcasts drove the boys in my village to violence.... Some of them joined the boys from other villages to kidnap oil company executives or bar oil company workers from doing their work. (9)

Laye's comments portray how broadcasts and testimonies of resistance against neo-colonial oppression can expose unknown and hidden injustices perpetrated by the state and corporations, and they also show how such revelations can spur violent responses from those who experience the social and environmental injustice criticized in the media. Laye says: "If we had to suffer amidst such plenty, then these boys would cause as much havoc as possible until someone took interest in our plight and until justice, as they saw it, prevailed" (9). The Ijaw boys are driven to violence from their experiences of environmental and economic injustice, but especially from hearing about how much wealth is obtained from the degradation of their traditional lands.

Radical or criminalized resistance in the Niger Delta is, of course, not only caused by what the youths hear on the radio, but also by the anger and frustration caused by daily experiences of pollution and globalization. Oriola explains how threats to environmental safety prior to the escalation of violence in the Niger Delta in the 2000s were often challenged through peaceful protests by Niger Delta communities (60). He points out that youth and community



resistance included the barricading of entrances to oil companies, often accompanied by a letter of eviction from the traditional community where major pollution occurred (60-61). For Oriola it was the irresponsiveness of oil companies and the violent and traumatic responses by the military that radicalized the youth (66). Young Niger Deltans resorted to militancy that enabled them to survive the slow violence, and also to speak back to environmental and political injustice (66-67).

Discussing the socio-cultural values of the sections of contemporary Nigerian society influenced by petro-culture, Andrew Apter argues that such forms of criminal response “[are] not strictly motivated by personal greed but [serve] as a form of rational investment in symbolic and social capital” (39). The pollution of Ijaw land by crude oil, the loss of land for subsistence, and the poverty and unemployment interweave into a traumatic rage that influences Niger Delta youth towards violent ways of gaining access to the economic resources lost as a result of industrial activities. As Laye remarks in *Yellow-Yellow*, “the so-called youth groups had become well-oiled extortion machines all in the name of the struggle. They stole, blackmailed, and vandalized for the progress and development of the Ijaw Nation, the Niger Delta” (158). While the bodies of the Niger Delta youth are physically “oiled” by the black stains of oil spills on their land, some of them have their minds, emotions, and desires disorientated by the trauma of slow violence, and by the hegemony of petro-culture.

Agary underscores how the rage and trauma occasioned by the loss of ancestral land as a result of crude oil spills are exploited by those in political power to perpetuate violence, and therefore to distract marginalized Indigenous peoples from protesting against the corrupt and undemocratic government. The government, in the novel, gets local community leaders entangled in the social immorality of corruption, unaccountability, and misplaced priorities:

Communities were fighting over who legitimately owned what land after more local government areas were created, after local government boundaries were reviewed, and after local government headquarters were relocated. Due largely to the politics involved in the distribution of funds by the federal government and the oil companies in the Niger Delta, all parties believed, rightly or wrongly, that whoever owned the land controlled the local government and whatever funds it received .... People were convinced that the land's unpredictable leader was deliberately fanning the embers of ethnic conflict to shift focus from himself and his bid to succeed himself in the promised upcoming elections.

(109)

In the novel, the processes for determining revenue sharing policies, the basis for the allocation of oil royalties to oil-producing communities, and the modalities for local government creation and recreation are immersed in corruption and nepotism to the profit of a select few. As Agary demonstrates, such revenue allocation plays upon the greed of some local community members and creates jealousy, distrust, and enmity among otherwise peacefully co-existing communities like the Ijaw and Itsekiri. Consequently, the oppressed communities are distracted from collaborative resistance against slow violence, oppression, and dictatorship as a result of infighting. Conspicuously, the dictator manipulates unsuspecting oppressed minorities and uses their infighting to bolster his power. The young Ijaw men also imagine that they are resisting globalization and fighting for their people and their land by resorting to violence, kidnapping, and vandalizing oil infrastructure, whereas, their resistance causes further dislocation of Niger Deltans, especially women who may not be culturally and physically predisposed to engage in dangerous activism.

In *Yellow-Yellow* the environmental and social crisis coupled with the violence of the Ijaw men perpetuates the geographical and the literal displacement of Ijaw women into foreign spaces. Many young women are forced to engage in prostitution in urban centres in order to provide for their impoverished families. Older women, including Laye's mother, struggle to survive by farming on unpolluted foreign lands, while many of the women in the village are oppressed by their traumatized and angry husbands. Other displaced women, like Laye, find jobs in the city, but become immersed in the Nigerian petro-culture that exploits the financial needs of the displaced women to satisfy the sexual desires of the men. Laye moves from the village because she cannot stand the violence, tension, and stagnancy in which Niger Delta men are entangled: "the tension and conflicts in the village borne out of frustration were familiar to me.... These images darkened the canvas of my village life.... The desire to start a new life [in Port Harcourt] far outweighed any fears I had" (40–41). In as much as the resistance and the vandalism by the men is conceived as a possible way of getting back the land, the novel suggests that such resistance is unsuccessful because of the military response, and because the movement itself has been corrupted by petro-culture.

While the rage of Niger Delta men is exploited for political interests, the bodies of Mexicans in *Whispering in Shadows* are equally exploited for profit by American companies. Their bodies are used up in exploitative sweat shops for the profit of American capitalists who take advantage of the desperation of impoverished Mexicans. Indigenous people, and especially women and children, are also forced to join the exploitative globalized capitalist wage-labour market. As Armstrong portrays, globalization in Mexico emphasizes the capitalist economic system of consumerism in contrast to the traditional systems of spiritual-based agronomy of Indigenous peoples. The Mexican government forces Mayan farmers to sell their lands for

industrial development. It uses economic tools like price regulation and the political instrumentality of the military to suppress the trade of traditional agriculturalists who refuse to sell their lands:

The market has shut them out by lowering the prices to such an extent that they cannot even pay costs .... They believe it is to force them out. To have to sell their lands. They say there has been oil and gas discovered in some of the areas surrounding this region.

They are afraid most of the time that they will lose their way of living and be forced, as many already have been, to give up and live in total poverty, scattered and landless. (176)

In similar ways to Niger Deltans in *Yellow-Yellow*, the Mayan people are subjected to politically-induced dislocation because of the resources buried beneath their ancestral land. As Penny's Mexican friends assert, the Mayan territory has been ravaged by violence and war. They are put under heavy economic and political surveillance, and their trade is frozen by those in power so that they are forced to sell their lands for oil exploration. The Mayans are aware that losing their traditional economic culture and conforming to the dominant wage-labour system will expose them to further dislocation. Not only will their ancestral lands be desecrated for industrial purposes, but since they will no longer possess economic agency they will be exploited and used up by those who possess economic leverage, such as industrial entrepreneurs, land owners, or tourists.

Seeing landless and used-up Mayans who roam market places selling or begging is profoundly unsettling for Penny:

Thin, tired looking people with dark sad eyes, backs bent under bundles. Images of crippled and blind old people, begging, and skinny children with their hands out. Over it

all, the girl's pain filled face with the huge oozing swelling on the side of her throat. And the eyes of her mother. Staring straight into [Penny's] soul. (169)

*Whispering in Shadows* portrays how Mayan people are exposed to dehumanizing living conditions, worn out and used up as a result of progress and change, which takes their lands away from them and puts them at the mercy of tourists and corporations. Armstrong's novel asserts that Mayan people are dislocated for economic purposes. They are worn out from the exploitative labour that they are forced to engage in after their displacement. The labour power of the Maya, exercised at the level of the body, is exploited and used up through the production of handmade goods that they sell at ridiculously low prices to foreign tourists, or as labourers at American-owned sweat shops. As Penny remarks, what is ultimately left of the Mayans are "displaced, sick and starving bodies" (166).

The fact that Penny subsequently discovers that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Mexicans are "forced by poverty to sell [their] blood, kidneys, skin, and corneas" (165) is an example of explicit ways by which Mexican and Mayan bodies are literally used up. She adds that "there are reports coming in from all over Central America of disappeared children. In Guatemala, for instance, people are attacking Americans, because of suspicions around the kidnapping of Indian children for sale" (166). At a material level both the dead and the living Indigenous bodies are used up. Body parts, tissues, and the bones of the dead, are bought and sold, or even stolen for medical treatment and scientific advancement of the wealthier global nations. Penny's conception of the capitalist market for human parts makes visible the symbolic notions of the using up of Mayan people, as well as the dismemberment and fragmentation of a people under globalization. Since Penny's discourse on the selling of human parts follows immediately after she witnesses the tiredness, poverty and economic exploitation of the Mayans,

the economic exploitation of the physical labour power of the Mayan and the using up of their body parts, function under the singular logic of the exploitation of the human body for capitalist ends.

The exploitation of the body by capitalist and political power also parallels the using up of the female body under unequal systems of power. Armstrong and Agary both portray sexual labour as a significant means by which the female body is exploited and used in the interest of those in power. In *Whispering in Shadows* and in *Yellow-Yellow* prostitution is represented as an alternative means of survival for Indigenous and Niger Delta women who, traumatized by the fractures produced by their spiritual, cultural, and economic dislocation from ancestral spaces, migrate to cities in search of a better life. They soon discover that selling their bodies may be their only means of subsistence. Penny's elder sister Lena engages in prostitution as a result of poverty, addiction, and loneliness, whereas Laye's friends primarily prostitute themselves in order to earn money for their personal and family upkeep. However, the issues of poverty and dislocation are common in both representations of prostitution, and the associated hazards of the trade - homicidal violence, dehumanization and cultural disorientation - are instrumental to the representation of the normalized system of slow genocide in both novels.

Research on sex work in Vancouver reveals that many Indigenous women in the city are forced into prostitution in response to violent traumatic experiences (Farley *et al.* 34). It is also argued that Indigenous women are often exposed to further violence on account of prostitution. Such women are often homeless, and face the danger of being beaten, raped or even killed (35). In *Whispering in Shadows* Lena is representative of the precarious living conditions of many Indigenous women in Vancouver. After moving to the city, Lena follows her boyfriend who becomes addicted to drugs after becoming unemployed and homeless:

[Harry] started doing dope and for awhile [*sic*] I stayed away from it.... Eventually I hit the streets for it. I did things I never want to remember.... Seven years ago, after I almost ODed, I decided to quit. I went through narcotics treatment. It's hard. I've slipped a few times. But then Toby, the miracle came. I was too ashamed of myself to come home. I thought I could do it on my own. That all I needed was Toby and the support group. But I got this need. I don't quite know what it is. It's like I can't live alone. I don't know how. Like I'm not a full person. Like my arms and legs are missing. Like I needed somebody to be there, even if he's shit. And all of them were. (271-272)

Lena's dependence on drugs causes her to "hit the streets," suggesting that she engages in the sex trade in some form. Lena's conversation with Penny, after returning to the Okanagan, portrays Lena as a victim of both drug abuse and homelessness. Significantly, Lena's social, moral, and cultural dislocations, represented here in terms of bodily dismemberment, coupled with her reorientation for survival in the city, produce and maintain her disconnection from the land and her family, and thereby reinforce her cultural, spiritual and material precarity.

According to research, about 90% of the Indigenous sex workers in Vancouver neither intended to be involved in the sex trade nor wish to continue (Farley *et al.* 242). Many of the sex workers were victims of lateral violence, including domestic violence and recurrent rape from relatives (246). Armstrong's novel portrays the double-victim position of some Okanagan women under the violent and traumatizing systems of neo-colonization. While both Indigenous men and women are shown to be dislocated, traumatized, and enraged by slow violence and racism, Armstrong's novel emphasizes how female bodies are sexually exploited by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men. The women are at the receiving end of Indigenous masculine rage against the state and the global society. For instance, Lena is subjected to

domestic violence at the hands of her partner Harry. Penny's mother informs Penny: "Toby is gone. [Lena] and Harry had a big fight. He's been drinking again, you know. He straightened up there for awhile after you first came back. He is trying to beat up Toby and Lena took a licking from him, trying to protect Toby" (267). Lena is culturally dislocated, traumatized, and shamed as a result of her displacement from her traditional community and her involvement in prostitution. She is also a victim of Harry's anger. It is suggested that his violent attitude is recurrent, for Penny asks: "Did she call the cops on him this time?" (267). His drinking and violence against Lena and her son are embedded in affects of anger and addiction that produce the expression of deep-seated rage.

Lee Maracle has identified such lateral violence as the manifestation of an imposed and normalized anti-colonial rage in Indigenous peoples: "Lateral violence among Native people is about our anti-colonial rage working itself out in an expression of hate for one another" (11). Maracle suggests that hatred and infighting among Indigenous peoples are modern apparatuses that foster the continuation of the slow genocide of Indigenous peoples: "we have stepped up the campaign against ourselves where the Europeans left off (11). Indigenous peoples are situated as seemingly responsible for their own annihilation, whereas it is actually the dominant capitalist culture that covertly reproduces genocidal violence among Indigenous peoples through the normalization of traumatizing acts of environmental, political, and cultural dispossession. Accordingly, the rage that Indigenous people may express against their kin is often a trauma-response to the recurrent violence of neo-colonization. In *Whispering in Shadows* Harry is a victim of neo-colonization and dislocation just as much as Lena is, but Lena and her child Toby are then further victimized by Harry's rage against the system. Harry's damaged masculinity thus oppresses, injures, and further traumatizes Lena. Prostitution and lateral violence therefore



constitute two ways through which the Indigenous female body is used and sacrificed for the sexual pleasure of patriarchal figures, or objectified as targets upon which one can enact violence in order to serve the rage of oppressive, and oppressed, Indigenous masculine figures.

Similar instances of lateral violence as symptoms of normalized anger, and of the double victimization of female characters as a result of slow violence, are also embodied in *Yellow-Yellow*. Agary's text shows how women are doubly wounded by the ecocide that results from the activities of the oil industry: "Nowadays, the men were even more oppressive than the women alive could remember.... The tension and conflicts in the village borne out of frustration were familiar to me. Some women walked around deaf in one ear because they dared to question their husband's wisdom in spending the last kobo in the house on booze" (40). Both men and women are spiritually, economically, and socially dislocated and traumatized by the oil spills and acid rain, but, like Lena, Ijaw women in *Yellow-Yellow* are more directly the victims of the anger and frustration of the men.

In *Yellow-Yellow* female bodies are most commonly violated and exploited as a result of their entanglement in a male-dominated petro-culture. In Port Harcourt the men use their petro-dollars to exploit poor women. If, according to Laye, "Port Harcourt was built for trade" (77), the trade involving petro-dollars in Port Harcourt is not limited to crude oil business; it also includes women who are able to keep a list of "several boyfriends [with whom they] work [their] way through" (128). Emem, Laye's colleague, represents this group. She dates some men "just because they [give] her money" (128). The petro-culture of poor Port Harcourt women, as portrayed by Agary, involves the mentality of dependence on the petro-dollars of men for women's own financial stability.

Female subjugation to male dominance is an integral functioning of the faceless and impersonal complexity of the power of globalization. According to Peter Christoff and Robyn Eckersley the impersonal social and economic structures often recycle themselves mostly “by perpetuating conditions of disempowerment and/or material dependency” (9). Under these terms, globalization perpetuates itself through the processes of slow violence, so that the dislocation of traditional peoples, and particularly women, from their lands connects with a culture of material and financial dependence of these marginalized women on the male social agents who possess power. This normalized neo-colonial mentality forces women to choose sexual labour as an alternative means of economic survival. In fact, some women, such as Emem, may not be prostitutes, but engage in sexual activity partly for financial interests.

The prostitutes in Laye’s village imagine that selling themselves to foreign oil workers will offer them the opportunity to escape from poverty and violence: “The whiteys were always the catch of the day. Whiteys gave a lot of money; bought gifts; rented flats for their girls; and, if the girls were lucky and had the right native doctor, they could get their whiteys to fall in love with them and maybe take them away to whitey’s home country” (37). Prostitution as a culture of “dependency” is ironic in the sense that, as Awhefeada suggests, “the white men whom the vulnerable girls see as redemptive figures, represent the agents of their socioeconomic ordeal, the oil multinationals” (104). The exploitation of the Niger Delta by multinational oil companies is parallel to the exploitation of Niger Delta female bodies by oil company officials. Ironically, the girls see the same people who exploit and impoverish them and their lands as those who will help them escape from insecurity and poverty. They would go to great lengths to “catch” foreign white oil-company workers:

Girls did anything to get a whitey. If it meant travelling deep into the bushes of Isoko land to get a love potion, then it had to be so. If it meant putting a scar on another girl's face for daring to swoop in on the whitey they discovered and laid claims to first, then they were prepared for the battle. (37)

In the same way as slow violence is entrenched in the violence of young Niger Delta men against themselves, the slow violence that Niger Delta women experience is perpetuated through the hazards of sex work.

In the end, the final outcomes for the women show their initial reasons for choosing to engage in sexual labour when Laye remarks: "After recounting all of these terrifying tales, our visitors would add, 'And na our money o! Na our oil money!'" (38). The women are poor, tired, stressed out, and used-up, but they are not just prostitutes; like Ijaw militants, they are enlisted in their own form of justified petro-war aimed at reclaiming some of the petro-dollars earned from the oil drilling that has devastated and incapacitated them and their lands. They are a class of young women on whose shoulders rest the hopes of survival for entire families. Their commitment to helping their families at home often earns them heroic status. They are welcomed with flare whenever they return to the village, with "everyone in the visitor's family scurr[ying] to make them comfortable" (35-36).

**Chapter Two:**  
**Painting the Invisible: Images of Globalization and Slow Violence**  
**as Light, Darkness, and Monster**

Jeannette Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* portray the genocidal violence, facelessness, and the deep hegemony of the processes of globalization. The novels represent globalization through a Manichean binary of light and dark, and through the imagery of monstrosity. This chapter analyses the dramatization of the metaphor of monstrosity in the novels, which represent globalization as a slow invasion of land and culture. I will analyse how "light," which connotes enlightenment, clarity, and vision, is paradoxically used to represent the effects of globalization. The paradox of the representation of globalization as both light and dark underscores the multifaceted nature of globalization, its widespread grounding in law, in market functions, in the processes of education, in intellectual activism, and in its ability to reconstruct culture, redefine truth and desire, and set the parameters for the definition of the power of agency.

Both novels metaphorically represent globalization in terms of a self-reproductive 'slipperiness,' which causes forms of resistance to perpetrate and re-inscribe the dominant culture and ideology that it opposes. In chapter one, I analysed how the adaptations of peoples and cultures to the violence of ecocide and socio-economic cultural change provoke the migration of people from traditional territory into foreign spaces for the purposes of economic survival. As I argued, adaptations are also characterized through Indigenous peoples' engagement in alternative "occupations" like sex work, vandalism, and bunkery. Alternative occupations for survival in *Whispering in Shadows* and in *Yellow-Yellow* can be conceived as forms of resistance through counter-cultural self-affirmation. These forms of resistance in both

novels are however more associated with a cultural adaptation for survival than they are about organized activism or resistance. In this chapter I will analyse the representations of resistance in both novels in terms of explicit, non-violent activism carried out by minorities who possess economic, intellectual, social and political agency. I will show how the novels represent homogenizing power and the facelessness of globalization through a comparative analysis of the contradictions in the politics of the characters who lead struggles against globalization. I will also analyse the self-recycling hegemony of globalization in and through the agency of activism by exploring the way in which the texts represent the contradiction of resistance against globalization, which can be seen in how the agency and the resistance of both Admiral in *Yellow-Yellow* and Penny in *Whispering in Shadows* unintentionally reproduce globalization's power. Penny and Admiral are not complicit with the forces of globalization, as their goals are grounded in their ability to fight against a neo-colonial mentality and the effects of globalization, nevertheless, both novels show how acts of resistance against globalization, which include such social and community-focused projects as economic stimulus for the underprivileged and underemployed, opposition to oppressive military regimes and the military-industrial complex, and environmental protection from state-sponsored global corporations can entrench the hegemonic power of globalization.

### **Globalization as Light: Redefining the Concept of Light**

What Nicholas J. Saunders describes as “The centrality of light to Amerindian conceptions of life” (18) is represented in *Whispering in Shadows* by the revealing, protective and preservative power that comes from natural light: in particular the sun and the moon. The sun and the moon's revelatory impressions upon Penny are grounded in pan-Indigenous

cosmology. This is in line with the ethnographic evidence that suggests that pan-Indigenous cultures throughout the Americas perceive the world as “infused with spiritual brilliance” (Saunders 16). Despite the range of different cultural significations across communities, the pan-Indigenous perception is that “natural phenomena such as sun, moon, water, ice, rainbows, and clouds ... [holds] an inner sacredness” (Saunders 16). For Saunders, the varying attitudes towards “brilliant objects among pan-Indigenous peoples appear to have emerged from and cohered around a worldview that saw light, dazzling colors, and shiny matter as indicating the presence of supernatural beings and essence” (17). Saunders explains that “Indigenous Amerindians associated light with the mirrored realm inhabited by bright spirit beings who became visible to shamans, priests, and rulers in visions aglow with multicolored light” (18). In *Whispering in Shadows* Armstrong uses the Indigenous symbols of the sun and the moon to portray light in terms of illumination, revelation, protection, and preservation. Penny, for instance, notices that the moonlight streaming through her living room window “whisper[s] urgently to her” (82).

Armstrong also counters this perception of light with the representation of light as the cultural hegemony of globalization in illuminated cities. Global cities have been conceived of in terms of a “moving quality: the centre, the activity, the light” (Raymond Williams 5). Globalization in all of its social, political and economic dynamics seems to coincide with this representation of light. Arundhati Roy’s definition of globalization reflects how the light of globalization can be understood as an unequal hierarchical economic and social practice: “I think of globalization like a light which shines brighter and brighter on a few people and the rest are in darkness, wiped out” (qtd in Nixon 1). Roy stresses how globalization can be seen as a

metaphorical enlightenment for those who are enriched by its “glow,” but which also isolates the poor, women, and ethnic and racial minorities in darkness.

In *Whispering in Shadows* global and urban capitalist culture is portrayed as a light that seems both promising and luxurious. Penny makes a distinction between the city and the country when she asks Lena: “Maybe the big city lights are blinding you.... Maybe what you are looking for isn’t in the bright lights of the city or that silver cloud you shoot up.... Maybe it’s in the rising sun of each new day” (39). Globalization is described here as a light that blinds, while the “rising sun of each new day” is what Penny perceives as the light that will heal and give a sense of accomplishment to Lena. The essence and spirituality ascribed to natural illuminations is grounded in the Okanagan cosmology that Armstrong portrays. Healing as a result of reconnection to the land restores traditional cultural knowledge and practice to dislocated Indigenous characters. When Lena comes home on her ancestral territory to heal she remembers what her great grandmother Tupa had told her: “She used to say to wrap the light from the rising sun around you because the shadows from the dream world followed you everywhere” (275). The sun, according to Tupa, is a protector from nightmares and from the monstrous shadows of the “dream worlds.” Armstrong’s representation of the power of the sun’s light is that of traditional ritual that is indispensable for Indigenous life and healing. In referring to her life in Vancouver, Lena says: “I forgot how to wrap the light of each new day around me” (275). Armstrong’s novel suggests that a reconnection to the land is produced through memories associated with the sun. In *Yellow-Yellow* Laye’s spiritual reconciliations with transcendental powers, her mother, and her land is realized after she casts her mind back to the realities of life on the land, which is similar to how Lena’s reconnection with the land is preceded by her memory of Tupa’s words about the importance of being connected to the sun and to the land.

Lena's return to the Okanagan and to "the warmth of family" makes her remember that connectedness to family and land constitutes a particular Indigenous reality of spiritual and emotional wholeness.

In *Yellow-Yellow*, after Laye becomes pregnant and is abandoned by Admiral, she thinks to herself:

My life was out of focus.... I needed to refocus, and this time I would have to do it myself. Everything I had had in life up until that point had been handed to me on a platter, and I had taken it all for granted. I had forgotten the coarseness of my mother's hands, which worked tirelessly.... I had forgotten the friends I left behind to struggle for every meal. That evening I remembered. (177)

Laye's spiritual reconnection to the land and to her mother is grounded in a process of "remembering." While Laye remembers the extremely difficult life lived working the land, Lena remembers the harmonious experiences that characterize her life on the land. Whether it recalls memories of suffering, or of joy and plenty, memories of life on the land similarly destabilize the dominant urban mentality of individualism, and re-establishes traditional conceptions of self in relation to family and to the land. Such memories recall the warmth of the sunlight, and the connections to family and to the land that assures spiritual and emotional wholeness essential for Indigenous (and in fact all human) survival.

For characters in *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows* the act of remembering contests the notions of enlightenment and illumination in the globalized city. In *Whispering in Shadows*, for instance, the city is described as a contrasting light to the natural light of the sun and moon. The representation of globalization as a light for the poor and marginalized racial or ethnic minority is used by Armstrong to describe how development, displacement and the



dominant cultural hegemony of globalization can possess explicit illuminating forms of light while conversely and implicitly exuding the nescience that darkness represents. Penny states this directly: “It’s like this huge darkness is looming world-wide and consuming everything good. And it’s so much stronger than the small candles and flowers at the centre of these [sunrise ceremony] circles” (188). Armstrong portrays the culture of globalization as an “other” light that must be contested because it is a “looming” darkness.

### **Monstrosity: Imagining the Processes of Globalization**

The all-consuming darkness represented in *Whispering in Shadows* metaphorizes a form of monstrosity that can be compared to similar symbolic representations of globalization in *Yellow-Yellow*. Globalization is both symbolically and explicitly represented in Armstrong’s and Agary’s novels through images of monstrosity. The description of the monstrous timber harvesters in *Whispering in Shadows* and the equally slow and all-consuming movement of the spilled crude oil in *Yellow-Yellow* are used to symbolically represent the facelessness of globalization.

Monstrosity, in relation to the effect of globalization on people and land, is central to Rachel Stein’s comparative analysis of environmental injustice in Canadian Indigenous and African American communities. Stein argues that globalization can be conceived of by the metaphor of humans “eating” other human and non-human beings. She uses romanesque “imagery and stories of cannibalism” as metaphors for the “deadly capitalistic mode” (196). Contemporary capitalism, according to Stein, “deems everything ... even other humans, as food for profit, to be literally consumed to sate one’s greed” (196). Analogously, Indigenous and minority peoples in *Yellow-Yellow* and in *Whispering in Shadows* experience the tangibility of

the violence ensuing from globalization in terms of invading logging machines and crude oil spills. In both novels the human victims never come directly in contact with the political and economic powers that profit from their suffering. Masked behind oil spills and timber harvesters, the crude oil investors and the industrialists unjustly dispossess Indigenous peoples of their traditional land. Clear-cut logging by timber harvesters and oil pollution are therefore described respectively in each novel as monstrous actions.

In *Whispering in Shadows* the timber harvesters are characterized as animate monstrous beings:

The machines are now directly across the road. [Penny] can see at least three of them.

They look like huge alien insects, crawling steadily along with huge pinchers in front.

The sound coming from them almost drowns out the voices of the people chanting and shouting.... They look so tiny next to the machines. ‘Stop. Stop. Stop the slaughter. Stop the Monsters. Stop the killing of trees.... The chanting grows louder but so does the angry sound of the machines. (113)

After the protesters are forcefully dispatched by the police, Penny notices that “[t]he machines are already starting their crawling advance on the trees. The magnificent old cedar, which sheltered her for the night and soothed her, is just visible above the other trees, swaying and nodding” (121). Whereas the timber harvesters are directly called monsters in *Whispering in Shadows*, the oil pollution in *Yellow-Yellow* is not directly identified using the term. Yet the emphasis on verbs such as spread out, swallow and drown in reference to the devastating and traumatizing impact of the oil spill in *Yellow-Yellow* suggests similar notions of monstrosity as *Whispering in Shadows*. Laye narrates:

I watched as the thick liquid spread out, covering more land and drowning small animals in its path. It just kept spreading and I wondered if it would stop, when it would stop, how far it would spread.... There was so much oil, and we could do nothing with it – vicious oil that would not dry out, black oil that was knee-deep (4).

Laye later remembers the traumatizing incident that economically disempowers her family:

The day my mother's farmland was overrun by crude oil was the day her dream for me started to wither, but she carried on watering it with hope. The black oil that spilled that day swallowed my mother's crops and unravelled the threads that held together her fantasies for me. (10)

The same slow-moving motion of the timber harvester in the sacred traditional spaces of Indigenous peoples in Armstrong's novel is similarly represented in the oil spill that occurs in Laye's village. The description of Bibi's farm being submerged by the oil creates a similar imaginative "monstrous" effect as the harvesters eating into the forest. The crude oil on Bibi's farm is personified in its acts of killing and by its vicious nature. Laye recognizes the crude oil as a force that has "overrun" her mother's farmland and as one that "swallowed" her mother's crops (10). Laye's choice of descriptive terms with regard to the oil spill creates imagery that is figuratively suggestive of an invading monster. Laye's view of the oil spill as a monstrous invasion is similar to a description by one of the witnesses of slow violence quoted in Saro-Wiwa's *Genocide in Nigeria*: "An ocean of crude oil moving swiftly like a great river in flood, successfully swallowing up anything that comes its way. Cassava farms, yams, palms, streams, and animals for miles on end" (58). Oil spills devastate families and communities, causing despair, hunger, sickness and death, and so is recognized as genocidal monstrous attacks that spread, swallow, and drowns Niger Delta land, flora, and fauna.

In both *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows* the forces of globalization are represented as a vicious monster characterized by vagueness and ambivalence. Armstrong's novel suggests that the forces that control the lights of globalization are the invisible entrepreneurs who use human populations in the contemporary globalized culture of North America to perpetuate the violence committed against them. Penny, for example, remarks that the "global system" is

the monster whose masters sit in shining towers in cities far removed from the suffering.... And everybody gets snared in its diabolical methods. From the woman in the grocery store buying a banana to the unsuspecting voter who wants a better tax cut. We get tainted with that blood without even realizing it and without knowing its effects somewhere else. (189)

According to Penny, however, capitalist corporations are not the only perpetrators of slow violence. Unsuspecting North American populations reproduce the system that promotes genocidal violence against pan-Indigenous and poor peoples across the Americas through the simple act of buying goods produced from the exploitation of other peoples and lands.

Armstrong portrays how people literally work as slave-labourers in American sweat shops along the US-Mexican border, and how Indigenous peoples in the villages close to Tuxtla in Mexico live in mud houses and work in corn fields controlled by the "conquistadora" (159), whom Penny's tour guide, Antonio, refers to as "A few wealthy families who control things" (159). The corn, coffee, and industrial goods produced through the enslavement of people desperate to survive are exported to the US and to Canada to be purchased by consumers unaware of the injustices perpetrated against those whose labour produced the goods. Susan Bryant argues that even when people are aware of these injustices, the culture of globalization has complicated the

link between awareness and action in North America. Bryant posits that in an age of environmental awareness, complex social practices have been immersed in a culture of “asynchronous communication” that fosters a social “disjuncture between environmental knowledge and action” (56-57). In *Whispering in Shadows* Penny complains about the apolitical attitude of those in North America who do not act against mass food production, economic globalization and the environmental and health risks produced by it:

Everybody in North America and other parts of the world knows somebody right in each of their families or immediate circle of friends or co-workers that has died or has [cancer]. It's like there is this massive denial around it all. We just hope we somehow escape it.... We are at war.... The trouble is we don't recognize the enemy. We buy the stuff that causes it. And we're content. We're dependent on it. We never get to see what kind of shit commercial food growing does, what making things like shoes, cars, and buildings does and so on. We just use them.... Sure we're getting more sticky about environmental controls. Pushing for minimum standards and stuff, but it's cumulative. It stacks up. Against us. And we get cancer. (245-246)

Penny does not blame others for this position, as she goes on to say: “it's like we are powerless to stop it. To change it. Each of us is just part of something so huge, as individuals, we have no choice but get along with the tide” (245). Thus, the violence of globalization is lethal like “a monster,” but, as Armstrong portrays, the master monsters are those sitting in the towers of big cities, while entrapped and manipulated populations become the monsters that are forced to survive off the processes that leads to their own destruction. Although Armstrong does not erase the possibility of resistance, she dramatizes the complex hegemony and constant entanglement that characterizes economic globalization in North America.

Laye's interpretation of the slow and violent crude oil spill does a similar job of symbolizing capitalist entanglement through the hegemony and the genocidal potential of petro-culture in Nigeria. Just as the spilled crude oil directly enforces domination by drowning small animals and the workable land, petro-culture as a whole, coupled with its political, cultural and economic hegemony, drowns traditional socio-economic and cultural realities. Agary symbolically represents the capitalist petro-economy, in similar ways to Armstrong's representation of the contemporary North American economic system, in terms of a network of faceless, invisible, and silent powers. There is no single character that represents the oil companies in Agary's novel. The government and multinational companies are symbolically characterized by the pervasiveness of the crude oil spills. Agary represents the companies as faceless entities that Niger Deltans essentially experience as disembodied monstrous oil spills. Just like the "masters" of the global economy are shielded away in city buildings far removed from the actual experiences of indigenous peoples in *Whispering in Shadows*, in *Yellow-Yellow* the faceless power of oil executives is characterized by the monstrous image of crude oil spills.

Agary's text represents how political power functions in a silent, traumatizing, and all-encompassing manner. Laye points out: "All those who dared complain about the land's leader mysteriously disappeared. We were even afraid to speak about such things in our homes. It seemed Big Brother was watching our every move, listening in on all our conversations and silently doling out punishments" (99). The military Head of State is rumoured to have mounted surveillance over the entire population, and he is believed to control the social and political climate by inciting violence in the Niger Delta. The Head of State seems to be omnipresent, faceless and silent, but vicious and homicidal.

Armstrong and Agary both portray how state governments and corporations are responsible for the socio-economic culture of economic globalization, but also, both novels underscore how those in power make themselves appear to be unconnected to the violence perpetrated by their interests. Their invisibility is corroborated by the socio-economic realities that manipulate the victims – indigenous and minority populations in particular – and use them to perpetuate the violence that is produced by a global economic system. Nigerians in *Yellow-Yellow* fight against each other for petro-dollars that are earned at the expense of Niger Delta lands, plants, animals and peoples, while in *Whispering in Shadows* North Americans purchase goods produced as a result of the exploitation of other people.

#### **“The Environmentalism of the Poor”: Agency and Resistance in the Global Society**

Rob Nixon states that “if the neoliberal era has intensified assaults on resources, it has also intensified resistance” (4). In *Yellow-Yellow* and in *Whispering in Shadows* the power of resistance is represented by characters that possess political, intellectual, social, and economic agency to speak back to the homogenizing force of globalization. They are those who are not merely reacting to the collective trauma of slow violence, but are, as Nixon describes, the “*porte parole*” of “the environmentalism of the poor” actively engaged in various organized ethical means of resisting neo-colonialism (23). Both novels portray how Indigenous communities continue the struggle against neo-colonization as active and assertive subjects who are empowered by spiritual and cultural knowledge, adapted to the pan-Indigenous struggle. These agents struggle against globalization through their positive initiatives for Indigenous cultural and economic preservation. Nevertheless, like the sex workers and bunkerers, their resistance is ambivalent and entangled, and sometimes exacerbates the violence of globalization. The agents

of resistance in both novels, by their own positioning in the cadre of power, are often ironically influenced by the dominant culture that they oppose. Both novels portray, however, how connectedness and collaboration between local peoples brings a restoration of the psychological strength lost as a result of slow violence. *Whispering in Shadows*, in particular, portrays how Indigenous collaboration for cooperative, creative, and innovative agricultural production grounded in traditional values and spiritual reconnections with the land provides a positive locally-based resistance that is sustainable, effective, and emancipatory.

Patricia Widener discusses the corruption and counter-productivity of many individuals and groups that resist neo-liberal globalization under two models: Daniel Faber's "Polluter-Industrial complex," and Allan Schnaiberg and Ken Gould's "Treadmill of Production" (5). The "Polluter-Industrial complex," as Widener suggests, identifies how the "beneficiaries of Industry," "political leaders," "policy makers," "scientists," and "think-tanks" collude in influencing and redesigning the political policies and culture to serve business interests, "which has led to weakened labor groups and insufficient environmental standards and regulations" (5). For Gould, the "treadmill of production" is a "cyclical and reinforcing system [that] has been orchestrated ... to increase production (and profits) by suppressing a workforce that remains committed to increased production (and therefore its own repression), [and] by contaminating incidentally or intentionally the public that remains committed to consumption" (5). The hegemonic patterns by which workers are made to contribute to their own precarity through their commitment to increased productivity reveals that contemporary social, political, and economic culture is steered by those in positions of power, so that even the "informed" ways through which people struggle against poverty have been reconstructed by the system to create more profit for the rich at the expense of the poor.



Peter Christoff and Robyn Eckersley demonstrate how globalization reproduces its hegemony and control over populations through different and opposing social agents. In *Globalization and the Environment*, they argue that “the degradation of the global environment is a complex phenomenon that has been managed and mediated by impersonal social and economic structures and certain privileged social classes, professions, and forms of knowledge that have systematically brought benefits to some at the expense of others” (7). According to Christoff and Eckersley these “impersonal social and economic structures” often recycle themselves, “sometimes by explicit and/or implicit coercion but mostly by perpetuating conditions of disempowerment and/or material dependency” (9). They argue:

An analysis of power, in all its dimensions, is therefore essential if we are to fathom the puzzle that we pose. This includes material power (the power to compel, coerce, or induce via the payment of money or resource provision), rule-based power (the power of rules, which encompass both regulatory and constitutive rules), structural power (the power of social structures in constituting social roles, relationships, and capacities), and the discursive power to define what is normal and acceptable and what is unthinkable (13).

Christoff and Eckersley maintain that the forces of globalization are complex and faceless and that “a simple actor-oriented approach to power cannot recognize the way in which power also operates through social structures or discourses” (13). Activism and resistance against globalization can be considered a struggle fought on grounds that are submerged by a pervasive hegemony of globalization that sets the parameters for defining and attributing power. *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows* represent how artists, environmentalists, entrepreneurs, and cultural and local political leaders, such as Penny in *Whispering in Shadows* and Admiral in

*Yellow-Yellow*, are socially shaped by globalization and are inscribed into the neo-colonial economic, social, and cultural system, whereas the “master monsters” are distant, absent, and intangible.

In *Yellow-Yellow* a retired naval officer, Admiral Kenneth Alaowei Amalayefa, is introduced to the reader late in the novel, but he plays a major role in the text’s representation of the Niger-Delta political resistance to slow violence, for he supports the Ijaw’s struggle against the oppressive military government in power. Admiral is intellectually and politically equipped to mount resistance against the military oligarchy ruling Nigeria, but he contradicts his well-intended political and economic leadership of Ijaws against the oppressive military junta, and re-inscribes the self-ambitious and use-and-dispose mentality of the global economic culture that he resists. In as much as the petro-based economy of Nigeria is controlled by an ethnic-biased oligarchy, Admiral’s region-centred job creation initiative is aimed at empowering the marginalized ethnic minorities, but it ultimately only helps a select few people based on ethnic interests. Despite Admiral’s noble intentions, his initiative re-inscribes neo-colonial systems of ethnic chauvinism, and maintains systems of normalized ethnic jealousy that causes violence among Niger Deltans. Admiral's sexual desires are also shaped by the social and economic power he possesses, so that he, an agent of resistance against the exploitation of Ijaws, significantly contributes to a similar exploitation of Ijaws through his deceptive and exploitative sexual relations with young Ijaw women. Admiral is a symbolic sexualized representation of the slow violence and the exploitation of Niger-Delta land and peoples affected by petro-capitalism, which is contrary to his characterization as an oppositional force against capitalist social and environmental injustice.

In *Whispering in Shadows*, Penny is equally in a position to resist the forces of globalization because of her education and her spiritual insights. Her personal experience and spiritual vision inspires most of her artistic representations of violence and ecocide. Her activism, art, and public speaking give her the opportunity to teach and inform others. Ironically, her acts of resistance actually rupture her relations with the land, her family, and herself. Her art, which is portrayed as both her vision and her voice, is intended to show the violence of environmental degradation to those whose economic activities contribute to environmental injustice. However, her message is ignored since the socio-economic system monetizes art so that the primary objective for making art is profit and not the expressed message in the art itself. Her art's power is submerged by the dominant socio-economic system, which shapes desires through market systems, and colonizes desire and art for the benefit of the few who enjoy economic power.

Art grounded in Indigenous spirituality is fundamental to Penny's environmentalism. Penny shows interests in putting colours together from a very young age. She is encouraged by Tupa, who remarks: "You and the colors can talk, I see. They tell you things. Listen to them. They never lie" (46). Penny's art is deeply influenced by the messages she receives from colours. Seventeen-year old Penny recognizes the use of colour as a force and a weapon for exerting an Indigenous-identified influence: "Maybe color only speaks power! Maybe it is power itself! That's why they painted up for wars or ceremony! And we still give colors at ceremonies. Holeee, even the way it's used by women, now, in the whose-conquering-who game! Power! Lipstick, eye-shadow, a red dress! An unseen force" (10). Penny is convinced that colour can be a potent weapon of war that can speak beyond the surface representation.

By the time Penny begins to study art, she has come to understand how colours can wage a violent war against the powers behind globalization. Penny is consumed by her spiritually-inspired representations of the “cracks” (124) and “gashes” (126) on the earth and on the human body as a result of capitalism's practices. Speaking about her painting to a gallery agent, she says: “it’s exciting. I particularly like the presence of such organic form overlaid with hard edge to create the illusion of gashes in the earth and skin. There is indeed a foreboding message on many levels” (126). Her painting represents the genocidal injustice affecting Indigenous peoples. It is borne not only from the inspiration she gets from the light from the sun and the moon, but also from her traumatic experience of the environmental injustice that displaces Indigenous people in Mexico. Her paintings contain “bloody limbs and coffee cans,” “camouflaged figures and bloodied bodies in corn patches,” and “bombed mud huts and trinket shops” (202). As her curator points out, her art “work[s] as a political statement” (202). Penny’s art intends, as she says, to “shock some sense into people” (203), especially those who amass the wealth produced from the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples. Penny, like Admiral, possesses the political agency to constructively speak back to the oppressive neo-colonial, economic and political powers. Her education provides her with the opportunity to speak, for example, at an environmental conference organized “to save a sacred wilderness” (89); a conference at which directly-concerned Indigenous peoples are ignored.

Like the silenced Indigenous peoples, Penny’s paintings fail to speak back to their target audience: those enriched by the violent processes of resource extraction and industrial technological advancement. The gallery curator refuses to exhibit Penny’s paintings that vividly portray the violence of both human and environmental degradation, claiming that the paintings lack market value: “[t]hese are lovely, my dear. I love the violence of the colours.... what I’m

concerned about, though, is the extreme graphic quality in some of them... I know they're great for shock value, but really, my dear, will they sell?" (202). What is important to the curator and to the gallery he works for is the market value and the profitability of the painting. Penny responds: "Sell? I'm not worried about that" (202). But the curator calls her attention to the undeniable financial needs of the gallery: "Unfortunately we do have to worry about such things. The costs to maintain this lovely gallery are outrageous" (202). He explains: "Don't misunderstand me. I utterly love your work. But my dear, have you thought of the collectors? They want something that can hang well... That's right. It's reality. Art is something only the wealthy can afford. They set the parameters of what is defined as art" (203-204). Making sales is what is most important for the continued existence of the gallery. This also means that the curator's responsibility to the commercial venture of the gallery is to ensure the marketability of the paintings, and not simply the aesthetics and politics of the art itself. There is a clash of interests between the gallery's priorities, and Penny's own political interests. She is asked to remove most of her paintings because the collectors would find them to be disturbing, and thus they will not likely be bought by wealthy customers. This means that despite Penny's desire to "shock some sense into people" (203), her paintings will not reach the walls of those who perpetuate the system itself. Penny's art cannot send the desired message of resistance if it is not diluted to fit both the aesthetic desires of the powers she is resisting and the profit-making goals of the art market. Simply put, for her art to be successful it has to be entrenched in the cultural and economic exigencies of capitalism.

The censoring of Penny's artwork can also be conceptualized in terms of the institutionalized patterns of the "Psychology of denial" (Nixon 20). Nixon, writing about the

systems of propaganda that those in power use to deny the injustice that their activities on land produce, asserts:

Neoliberalism's proliferating walls concretize a short-term psychology of denial: the delusion that we can survive long term in a world whose resources are increasingly unshared. The wall [which separates the rich and the poor], read in terms of neoliberalism and environmental slow violence, materializes temporal as well as spatial denial through a literal concretization of out of sight out of mind" (20).

The building of physical walls and high gates are intentionally used by those in power to keep themselves from seeing the violence of social and environmental injustice. In *Whispering in Shadows* the value placed on art by those who control the financial resources necessary to purchase it creates an invisible gate that preserves the 'ignorance' of the wealthy. Globalization creates invisible barriers against resistance through its censoring of Penny's art; art that is a testimony to the atrocities undertaken in the name of global capitalism across the Americas.

Penny experiences the censorship of her art as a traumatic and symbolic violence. When she realizes that her artistic message will be ignored she destroys her own paintings. She becomes enraged and blinded by the trauma of the silencing of her artistic vision. Penny's destruction of her own paintings marks the death of her identity as an artist. It marks the end of a powerful form of critique against globalization for Penny, and signifies a moment of victory for those who control the economic system. The rejection of Penny's paintings becomes, in essence, a catalyst for the traumatic and symbolic death that Penny suffers, while putting into relief the fact that globalization uses the instrumentality of opposition to re-inscribe capitalism's hegemony, control, and violence. Penny struggles against the system, but is constantly entangled by the hegemony of the system.

Penny discovers that she is also implicated in globalization by her anti-globalization work. The dehumanizing and labour-intensive culture associated with neoliberalism is represented by her research, lecturing, and activism, which separates her from her children. Because of the intensity of labour required by her resistance against globalization, she and her children are inscribed into dominant notions of imagined community enforced by globalization. As a result, Penny and her children become a fragmented family. While Penny is preoccupied by her lectures, her children are wounded by the emotional void resulting from her absence and by their dislocation from the land. Both Shanna and Merilee escape into different imagined worlds: Shanna turns to drugs and Merilee to music. Penny is not only dislocated by her lack of connections with her children, but she is also severed from the community she shares with her siblings and with other people in the Okanagan. Dustin incessantly complains, while Shanna, drugged and half-conscious, mumbles: "I don't know why you have to be a speaker and I wish you and me and Dustin and Merilee were home with Nanna" (129). Because of her work toward creating a more just and ethical society, Penny re-inscribes the fragmentation and individualist culture of contemporary North America on her children.

Penny's efforts to correct her wrongs by moving back to the Okanagan does not save her two daughters from succumbing to a capitalist culture in that the media proliferate ideas that equate scientific and technological advancements with global sustainable development. Towards the end of the novel, Shanna comes home to see her dying mother and reassures her: "There is lots of good medicine those doctors are researching and they'll cure you.... The world is getting a lot better with more and more new medicines, pretty soon there won't be any more sickness" (259). Contrary to Shanna's discourse on scientific progress, Penny has learnt from her own research that medical research often discovers cure for diseases through the use of other human's

body tissues, including Indigenous peoples' genes. Penny is convinced that "something's gonna backfire" (238). Penny is alarmed over a nightmare she has that entails a catastrophe as a result of a scientific resurrection of pan-Indigenous ancestors: "That ancestor granpa with the gun, maybe their spirits are mad.... That whole thing about collecting DNA from our long dead ancestors. Now that's creepy" (238). Considering various activities of medical research including "putting human genes into pigs and tobacco plants" and "cloning," Penny concludes that "it's like the world is gone crazy" (239). Penny does not believe that progress in the medical sciences, which puts spiritual and cosmological order in peril, will lead to the progress her daughter believes in. On the contrary, Penny predicts a future produced by science in terms of an apocalyptic "Doomsday" (238). Penny is extremely disappointed by the mentality that Shanna has adopted. Penny considers her parenting to be the most unsuccessful part of her life because Shanna, her first daughter, who is supposed to offer leadership and direction to her younger siblings in line with Okanagan traditions, is blinded by the myth of human progress through economic and technological evolution.

Agary's novel similarly characterizes how some forms of resistance against the faceless power of globalization may ironically foster the reproduction of lateral violence, social unrest, and female sexual exploitation among ethnic minorities. Admiral represents the agency of oppositional power for the marginalized Ijaw and Niger Delta peoples who have been side-lined in an enclave-economy dominated by military officers from northern Nigeria. The ethnic politics of the regime, coupled with Admiral's own critical stand against environmental degradation in his region, puts the retired naval officer in the precarious position of the victim. Laye points out: "He was a retired admiral of the Nigerian Navy, one of those forced into early retirement by the unpredictable regime" (117). David K. Leonard and Scott Straus's work on "enclave" economic



structures in modern African nation-states mirror the political environment that marginalizes Admiral and other minority Niger Delta people represented in *Yellow-Yellow*. According to Leonard and Straus:

The enclave idea implies that production is geographically concentrated, that a large portion of the land or capital goods involved in export production cannot easily be assigned to other profitable purposes, and that labor (which always is mobile) is a small part of the cost of production. Most states on the continent [of Africa] have a tax base that is built overwhelmingly on exports, and many derive most of their export income from enclave production, making the latter “enclave economies.” (12)

Leonard and Straus argue that Nigeria is controlled by a few individuals who hold on to economic and political power through the manipulation and selective distribution of the profits made from the enclave economy created from the oil or mining industry (13-18). Wole Soyinka, in *The Open Sore of a Continent*, and Ken Saro-Wiwa in *A Month and a Day* both point out that the powers that control the enclave-petro-economy of Nigeria are a northern-Nigerian oligarchy. While Soyinka names cabals such as the Sokoto Caliphate, the Northern Elite, the Kaduna Mafia, the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy, and the Sarduana Legacy cabal (87), Saro-Wiwa simply recognizes that there is “internal colonialism” in Nigerian politics (192). The northern-led Nigerian military junta that was in power from the 1970s to the late 1990s, during which Agary’s novel is set, was concerned with establishing and maintaining domination of the nation’s politics and economy by centralizing power within a limited class of political and administrative appointees, and by awarding contracts based upon ethnic origins, and, most importantly, loyalism (Soyinka 20). For Saro-Wiwa the domination of government by the major ethnic groups

has pre-empted the lack of government intervention against the slow genocide in the Delta (*A Month* 148).

The political marginalization of ethnic minorities in *Yellow-Yellow* is such that Admiral, who is from a southern Ijaw community, is out of favour with the northern military Head of State. Although he is represented as a victim of the system, he is also a figure who is able to criticize and oppose the system because of his social, political, and economic leverage. When he is forced to retire early from the Nigerian Navy by the regime, Admiral finds his voice against the military power through the social and economic capital he garnered while in office as a top military administrator. He enjoys the solidarity of some members of the armed forces, and is popular among community-based women and youth groups. Laye comments on his birthday guest list: “the list was an interesting mix of people. On his list were members of the armed forces, as well as community-based groups. There was a mix of society’s high and low” (119). The mix between the politically and economically powerful and the women and local youth community groups places Admiral at the centre of the identity struggle that ensues as a result of a process that Nixon has described as the “inevitable distance [between those with representational power and] the bulk of the impoverished people” they represent (26). Admiral attempts to strike a balance between his connections to the elite and his connections to the impoverished Niger Deltans. The middle position he occupies between those who have power and those who do not is highlighted in Laye’s description of the gifts given to Admiral at the party: “Those who sought business and political favours from Admiral also brought gifts of expensive liquor, fancy foods, and electronic gadgets. Admiral would end up regifting most of these gifts to all the relatives and friends who hung around him” (121).

Admiral is an influential political and economic social agent who is, nevertheless, deeply concerned about his people's predicament. After the party, he and other influential social actors make concrete plans to address issues affecting the Niger Delta: "They talked a little about politics – strategies for countering the head of state's plan to succeed himself, plans for addressing youth restiveness in the Niger Delta ... and, most importantly, lucrative businesses to create wealth for Ijaw youths" (121-122). Admiral uses his economic agency to empower the Ijaw: "Ijaws headed all his companies and investments and most of his employees were Ijaws" (117). Economic empowerment of the Ijaw nation, he believes, is central to the survival of Ijaw peoples from economic, cultural and physical extermination as a result of the loss of ancestral lands and fishing territories to environmental pollution. He even describes his collaborative resistance against the oppressive administration in terms of a military act of war: "It is a real battle o" (150). During the meetings he holds with the Ijaw youths, he discourages them from engaging in violence, but he does advise them to engage with the government and oil companies constructively and positively. Laye explains:

The next morning I woke up, and it did not look like Admiral had come to bed....

Admiral was sitting in his chair, holding his head with one hand and listening to [the youths] tell their tales of battle.... The so-called youth groups had become well oiled extortion machines all in the name of the struggle.... If Admiral did not give them money, then he was not doing anything for the Ijaw Nation – at least that would be their version of the story. Their story would not include the fact that he did not want to encourage violence as the first line of action, or that he wanted the youths to engage the oil companies and the government positively. (158)

Admiral's insistence on peaceful, ethical, and positive resistance puts him out of favour with the youth groups, but it does establish him as an Ijaw leader whose interconnectedness with the community of Ijaws has not been subsumed by the individualism and chaos entrenched in Port Harcourt's petro-culture.

In similar ways to Armstrong's portrayal of the efficiency of Penny's cultural leadership, Agary portrays Admiral as a cultural leader who is respected for his political and economic symbolic capital, and also for his intellectual input during political meetings and conferences. Both characters use their symbolic capital to educate and decolonize people who are influenced by false narratives spread by those in power. Both characters' agency empowers them to resist globalization, but their agency also paradoxically destabilizes the coherence of their work as a result of their own colonization by the culture of globalization that they fight against.

Admiral's cultural leadership is reflected in his strong commitment to the maintenance of Ijaw values, culture, language, and community, but his extramarital affair with Laye contradicts his love for the maintenance of traditional values. His contradictory commitment to Ijaw cultural survival is highlighted by Laye the first time that she meets him:

“Okoido, sir,” I greeted him in Ijaw, and curtsied the traditional way. “Seri. I like young girls who know where they come from. We need more young Ijaw girls like you and Lolo. Where have you been hiding?” He sounded so delighted, as though he had found the two people who were going to save the entire Ijaw race from extinction. (118)

Laye states that “he was [always] dressed in traditional attire” (120) and that “[a]lthough he had been living in the city for many years, he used some Ijaw expressions that I did not even know” (137). For Admiral, preserving the Ijaw language and traditions is as important as preserving the land and the people themselves. But Admiral is a complexly ambivalent character. He seems to

be sincerely concerned about Laye's future and wellbeing, for even though he succeeds in having sexual relations with Laye he remains committed to advising and encouraging Laye in her educational pursuits. Laye describes her visit to Admiral the day after her birthday:

[Admiral] had a special gift for me that he had not left at the gate. Before he handed the gift to me, he gave me a long speech about how he wanted me to go to school because he could tell I was an intelligent girl and had a bright future ahead of me. He promised that he would take care of everything that I needed to be a success in life. It almost sounded like a separation speech. He was in one of his serious modes, and I felt very uncomfortable when he was that way.... He asked me when my exams were and if I had started studying.... [He] handed me a check for seventy-five thousand naira. It was the largest amount of money anyone had given me at once. It was my birthday gift, money I was to spend wisely, to keep me comfortable so that I could focus on my studies. (153-54)

Through his motivational speech and his financial support, Admiral seems to show a personal commitment to Laye's education. Nevertheless, when Laye becomes pregnant by Admiral, he gives her money to abort the pregnancy in a dismissive manner. Laye realizes that "[Admiral] had two children who he took very good care of, and that was it. The other children he was interested in were the ones who kept his bed warm" (173-174). She is awakened to the fact that "those promises of 'I will take care of whatever you need' were falling on the ears of another pretty young girl, another girl desperate for love or just in it for the money" (173). Admiral's promises to Laye show themselves to be repeated deceptions aimed at acquiring sex from the female victim who may be in the game for the financial benefits, or who may be naïvely building unsustainable fantasies.

Apart from the secrecy and illicit nature of his sexual relations with young girls of the Niger Delta, Admiral also clearly maintains a symbolic sexualized violence founded on capitalist notions of the investment, the usability, and disposability of the body according to Foucault's bio-politics. The usability and disposability of the body, for Admiral, entails the infinite availability of the female body, as well as his own ability to wilfully exploit the female body. His dehumanizing treatment of Laye after she becomes pregnant shows that although he is an active agent of resistance against the dislocation and impoverishment of the Ijaws, he also re-inscribes the injustices of a system that dislocates and exploits his people.

Sisi warns Laye against the dominant culture of disempowerment and dependency on patriarchal figures prevalent among Niger Delta women. She introduces Laye to an alternative culture of independence. Laye narrates: "Once it was settled that I would try to gain admission into university the following year, Sisi said I needed a small job so that I could earn a little money to take care of my needs.... she could see me becoming as independent as Lolo one day, if I was not carried away by city life" (68). Sisi uses Lolo to explain what she means by the fact of getting "carried away by city life" (68):

You see this small girl? The reason I like her is that she is hardworking and has a lot of good sense. Not many young girls her age are able to fend for themselves these days.

They are all waiting for men to take care of them.... We are all *workaday* girls here, so you, too, have to pull your weight and learn how to be independent. (Original emphasis 68)

The "city life" refers partly to the dominant culture of dependency among women, and the contrasting "workaday girls" culture entails education and hard work. Laye's financial independence is dependent on her ability to become one of those Sisi describes as "workaday

girls”: independent women who struggle to succeed on their own, and who do not depend on men. Education and non-dependence on the financial largesse of men are fundamental to Laye’s escape from the colonizing cultural and economic grip of globalization. Laye’s reliance on Admiral for “comfort” re-inscribes her into the culture of dependence.

In the Okanagan and Niger Delta Indigenous communities respectively represented in *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow*, female education is considered key to acquiring the agency needed to be efficient and effective in the resistance against globalization, patriarchal marginalization, and exploitation. Education offers the possibility for social mobility away from the dispossession and poverty in the colonized traditional cultures and spaces for the two female protagonists. Penny becomes empowered to take on a position as an activist for the Okanagan and other pan-Indigenous communities because of her education. Laye, on the contrary, is disempowered after migrating to the city because she gets entangled in the culture of dependency prevalent among Port Harcourt young women. Laye’s mother Bibi, Sisi, Lolo, and Admiral, all of whom express love for Laye, believe strongly in the power of education. Laye says of her mother: “It was almost as though she was obsessed, consumed by the idea that my education would save me from what I had yet to understand” (9). After complaining about the government’s insensitivity to the Niger Delta environmental predicament, Admiral concludes by telling Laye: “See, that is why you must go to school and get your degree so that no one has an excuse not to give you an opportunity in life” (137). As far as Admiral, Bibi, Sisi and Lolo are concerned, once Laye receives a university degree, nothing else can prevent her success. Sisi encourages her, saying: “you, too, have to pull your weight and learn how to be independent so that you can take care of yourself and maybe even send some money to your mother” (68). But she then adds: “if you don’t have your degree, it will be hard for you (69). Laye’s loved ones all

tell her that education is her passport to financial independence in a male-dominated and ethnic-biased socio-economic system.

In *Whispering in Shadows*, Penny is equally propelled towards university as a means of gaining financial stability through professionalization and employment. Penny realizes her precarious position while engaging in manual labour: “what the hell am I doing up an apple tree? An apple knocker! That’s what I am. Just what my dad always told me not to be” (21). Penny experiences a moment of *prise de conscience* that reminds her of her late father’s advice. She insists: “there must be a better way to make ends meet than this” (21). By enrolling at the University of Victoria, she says to herself “I’m never gonna pick apples, stamp boxes or clean motels again” (41). Getting a university degree signifies salvation from exploitative wage-labour.

Laye and Penny are similarly pushed by their families to get a university degree so as to escape the poverty inflicted upon their respective minority and Indigenous groups by environmental dislocation. But there is, however, a discrepancy in the symbolism that can be ascribed to Penny's and Laye's educations. While Laye merely searches for an escape from poverty and patriarchal inequity through higher education, Penny's education is also meant to offer her upward social mobility from her working-class roots. Yet it also equips her with the knowledge and tools to fight against the injustices of environmental pollution and globalization through her training in the visual arts and economics.

Ultimately, instead of going into the university, Laye integrates into the dominant culture of dependence. Admiral, whom she depends on, is complicit with the system that allows for women's bodies to be used as sexual goods exchanged for money. While Admiral offers to support Laye's education, he capitalizes on her naivety to sexually exploit her. In fact, he is reputed to “have, in his wake, a string of girlfriends, often very young women” (120). However,



Admiral is not merely complicit in a system that gives him the opportunity to exploit others; he is also a creation of the system. As Ona Precious has argued:

Oil wealth encourages men in the region to take advantage of their perceived economic buoyancy by engaging in sexual intercourse with many girls often without protection....

The Delta's oil economy has generated several moral contradictions by creating a class of rich who flaunt their wealth and gain access to an extensive network of female sexual partners. (qtd in E.D. Simon 163)

Admiral cannot simply be classed as either a victim or a villain, but as one who, like other characters in the novel, is influenced by the corrupting petro-culture in the Niger Delta.

Admiral's sexual exploitation of Laye can be critiqued in terms of a representation of patriarchal culture that produces the very systems of inequity and violence that he himself critiques. At the same time, as a social agent Admiral is "invested" (Foucault) and "used" (Rimstead) by the dominant political and social forces of a globalized economy to maintain the systems of exploitation and disposal of Niger Delta peoples.

If Admiral's sexual behaviour is a part of the patriarchal culture that disempowers and objectifies the female body, his contribution to economic development in the Niger Delta instigates violence in the sub-region and contributes to the institutionalized slow genocide of Niger Deltans. His policies are aimed at what he calls wealth creation for the Ijaw, and he seeks to enrich Ijaw Niger Deltans irrespective of the continual impoverishment of other Niger Delta tribes that have communally lived with the Ijaws, and who have been equally victimized in the slow genocide perpetrated by the forces of economic globalization. Admiral's advancement of the cause of the Niger Delta maintains normalized systems of social inequality and nepotism, which causes inter-tribal unrest. He employs mostly Ijaws in a Niger Delta that also includes at

least thirty-nine other ethnic groups, including the Ogoni, Itsekiri, Isoko, Urhobo, Ukwuani, Kalabari, and parts of the Bini, Efik, Ibibio, Igbo, Annang, and Oron ethnic groups. Laye states that Ijaws and Itsekiris have lived so closely together in Warri that it was no longer clear “who owned the land” and “who were the tenants” (157). Laye also points out that there were “many people of mixed Ijaw and Itsekiri parentage” (157). The Ijaw and the Itsekiri are tribes of the Niger Delta that have similar agricultural and cultural relations with the land, have developed interrelated identities through marriage and land sharing, and have been equally dispossessed of land and identity by environmental degradation. Therefore, by the very processes of tribalizing his companies, Admiral discriminates against equally displaced Niger Delta peoples who, according to Laye, have created familial connections through inter-marriage and cultural and economic communalism. Admiral's ethnic-biased economic initiative, as well as his eventual financial contribution to the violent Ijaw tribal war against the Itsekiris (157), portrays how he is implicated in the very process that reproduces envy, infighting, and ethnic violence in and between Niger Deltans, despite his good intentions.

Admiral is, in short, a force of resistance whose complexity reveals his ambivalent position. He is both a victimized Ijaw opposed to petro-culture and a corrupted and complicit instrument of globalization. Admiral's employment policy creates segregation in families and communities, and inscribes the social fragmentation that globalization engenders. His sexual relations with Laye also portray him, through the symbolism of the female body as land, as an agent of violence against the land of the Niger Delta. Ultimately, Admiral re-inscribes the effects of globalization's exploitation of the Niger Delta.

While Admiral is instrumental to maintaining sexual and ethnic violence, Penny is an instrument through which globalization dramatizes its pervasiveness. Admiral and Penny are

cultural leaders of their respective minority peoples. They are both resolved to execute what they recognize as “war” against globalization using their respective skills: art, research, and activism against slow violence for Penny, and economic capital and socio-political leadership for Admiral. While Penny is able to create local consciousness against globalization, Admiral offers employment to the environmentally displaced Niger Delta youths. However, Penny and Admiral also re-inscribe the hegemony of globalization by reflecting the dominant culture and mentality constructed and maintained by the power of globalization. Since art, social and economic realities, and politics are defined and reconstructed in favour of profit-making in the global economy, the power of resistance paradoxically re-entrenches legacies of the economic and social systems that it opposes. Penny’s art will never reach the individuals who will understand her message and thus “shock some sense (203)” into them, her demanding activist work ruptures her relationships to the land and family, and her sensitization to unhealthy contemporary agricultural practices return upon her as she dies of cancer contacted from pesticide-laced food.

Nevertheless, Penny is not entirely unsuccessful in her role as an activist. Louisa Sorflaten shows how the construction of “Penny as a complex and multifaceted intellectual artist writes against essentialist notions of Aboriginal identity” (388). Sorflaten explains that Penny is “well versed in traditional Okanagan teachings, conceptions and experiences, as she is in anticolonial, anti-globalization, Marxist, and feminist intellectual frameworks” (388). Penny is considered a strong intellectual, social, and political leader whose education and determination also helps her family to re-unite Penny’s elder sister Lena with her son. Penny is especially effective in teaching others about the violence and neo-colonization of globalization. Armstrong shows how despite the fact that Penny clearly does not agree with the practices of globalization, her activism and parenting reflects how globalization functions to absorb and colonize the very

people who fight against it. Penny demonstrates how the individual fight against globalization is often a “whisper” against the empty, faceless, and powerful “shadows” of globalization.

Activists such as Penny who seeks to militate against this monstrous power are saddled with the task of mastering “a consciousness and activism that is rooted in one’s most immediate local and simultaneously cognizant of the local conditions and concerns of other local communities on a global scale” (Sorflaten 391).

On one hand, both *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow* represent the futility of radical resistance to globalization. On the other hand, however, both narratives underscore a different kind of war against globalization; one that entails conscious reconnection to family, to community, to the land, and to the power of transcendence. *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow* interweave the healing and restoration of spiritual and emotional wellness as a result of reconnection to traditional spaces with effectiveness in resistance. Agary and Armstrong underscore how reconnection and collaboration between individuals and families, between families and communities, and between communities and the land entail reunifications that create the strongest form of resistance to the traumatic acts of slow genocide.

Agary and Armstrong portray the significance of traditional cultural reconnection to the land and to the community. Laye, Lena, and Penny all represent how the re-establishment of interrelatedness between environmentally dislocated traditional people and their land and community is primal to the cultural re-orientation, economic sustainability, and self-determination of dislocated peoples. Lena’s healing, cultural re-orientation and hope for a fulfilled life is portrayed through the representation of her reconnection to land. Lena speaks to the spirits of the land:

I put these pennies here under your feet to honour you, who guard this mountain.... My sister, Penny, who also gives pennies, honours you of this place, where we have known so much happiness in the past. We have not been here for many years and ask that you recognize us, poor humans. We bring our children and grandchildren to you. To be filled with your spirit. (281)

Subsequently, “[t]he moment seems to stretch outward from them, on and on forward. Tears are silently dropping from Lena’s tightly closed eyes” (281). The few lines of the prayer said by Lena portray a spiritual communal reconnection between Lena, her family, and the land. The restoration of wholeness and warmth as a result of reconnections with family is also represented through Penny’s earlier return to the Okanagan with her children after she gets “worn out” and “used up” by her work and activism:

The drum starts the round dance song and Penny and her daughter begin the steps inside the circle of people, around the giveaway tarp on the grass. The people stand to shake their hands and to hug them one by one. The sage pot sends out its musky scent and covers them with its cleansing power. The smiling faces of her people, all around, greet her and her children. Her eyes fill and she feels like her tears will fall.... I forgot how this feels. Its like we’re being embraced by something so strong yet so gentle. Oh, my people. You are my medicine.... I commit myself to honour you and to do all that I can, that there will always be community, in this way, here and wherever such community thrives. I give myself back to this land, our home. (135)

The light, warmth, and power of the community deeply soothes, heals, and restores Penny. It occasions a re-affirmation of cultural identity and a pledge of allegiance to the land and community that Penny vigorously pursues for the rest of her life.

The Okanagan word *En'owkin* “‘is a conceptual metaphor’ ... that embodies the Okanagan ideal of coming to consensus through collaborative group process” (Haladay 32). This social and environmental philosophy is embedded in most of Armstrong’s literary and activist work. For instance, the notion of community and collaboration is central to the grassroots artistic training offered at the *En'owkin* Aboriginal writing centre, which Armstrong helped to establish (Grauer). This philosophy is emphasized both in her novels and in her essays. She argues: “[w]hat you are gifted with, and what you have been given in terms of skills, doesn’t only belong to you. It belongs to the community, and it is there for the benefit of the community in some way” (qtd in Haladay 32-33). As Haladay asserts, “Armstrong’s writing “articulate[s] her experience of the symbiosis of land, language, and community, and in doing so simultaneously generate and perpetuate a creative process that benefits more than a single person” (33).

In Agary’s text, there is a similar reconnection and reinstating of spiritual and cultural harmony amongst the displaced people, their families, and their land. The termination of Laye’s pregnancy symbolizes her cleansing from the cultural, emotional, and spiritual pollutions of displacement and petro-culture. The scene equally represents her reconnection to land and community in the aftermath of cleansing. The connections between the flow of blood, cleansing, and rebirth are embedded in African traditional cosmology, as discussed by M.Y. Nabofa. In his article “Blood Symbolism in African Religion,” M.Y. Nabofa extensively discusses the symbolic conceptions of the character of blood in African traditional religions, using Niger Delta’s Urhobo, Kwale, Isoko and Ibo cultures as case study. In African traditions, according to Nabofa, “blood is not only conceived as a natural symbol of life, but it is life itself” (390). Nabofa asserts that “there is mystical power in blood which is capable of expiating guilt and impurities from

man and from his environment” (396). Laye’s healing and reconnection to transcendence and to the land is realized in a moment of painful expiation:

I saw my mother’s face, and though there was very little I had done in Port Harcourt that would make her happy, she was smiling.... My fingers and toes went numb, and at some point, I feared that I might die.... I lay curled up in the foetal position on the cold tile floor until my sweat and the blood that gushed from between my legs drenched my clothes, and I began to shiver from the cold and the pain. I begged God for forgiveness and called on all my mother spirits for comfort.... The pain stiffened my joints, and the smell of blood stormed my nostrils as my being drifted into a river. I could hear the waves slowly chasing after each other; some lapped over my stomach, while others collided with canoes at the shore. I was enveloped in darkness and kept company only by the sounds of the night that lulled me to sleep. (177-178)

The blood that flows from Laye’s body represents her cleansing and purification as well as her reconnection to transcendence and to her family. Accordingly, Laye’s foetal position signifies her birth into a renewed cultural and social existence (178). The abortion dramatizes Laye’s detoxification from the petro-culture and her reconnection to her mother, to the powers of transcendence, and to the soothing flow of water that laps over her stomach.

Agary’s and Armstrong’s similar portrayals of spiritual cleansing and reconnection to traditional relationships and values differ in context and in scope. While Lena reconnects to her family and to the land by going back to the Okanagan, Laye reconnects spiritually to her mother, to the land, and to the power of transcendence, as she has no land to return to. Laye’s rebirth is not founded upon notions of a physical return to the land, but rather on a realistic representation of the notions of healing and cultural reorientation for dislocated Niger Deltans whose traditional

spaces may have undergone one of many forms of long-term pollution. Laye's spiritual healing and reconnection to the land is therefore transcendently-based, whereas Armstrong represents a spiritual and a physical reconnection to the traditional ways of relating with the land.

Nevertheless, both Lena's and Laye's reconnections to the land portray how the process of healing from the violence of dislocation leads to the establishment of a renewed cultural self-determination. Lena is optimistic about "throw[ing] away the old me" (*Whispering* 276), while Laye sees the termination of her pregnancy in terms of a "personal rebirth" (*Yellow* 177).

Agary's novel underscores the idea that education for the Niger Delta female child is primal to their ability to survive and insulate themselves from the violence and injustice that is prevalent in an environmentally destructive, yet unrepentant society. As emphasized earlier, everyone around Laye encourages her to attend university because that is her only chance for success. Laye's guides at the city, Sisi and Lolo, are celebrated as emancipated figures whose education, sense of discipline, and hard work put them in influential positions. Agary, as Etiowo suggests, "advocates girl-child education as a panacea [for sexual abuse and exploitation]" (137), but creativity and a sense of initiative seem to be silently preached as a sure means of emancipation for poor marginalized African women. Sisi is not able to attend school, but she empowers herself at a young age by investing. Lolo attends university, but never searches for a job because she becomes involved in investments and trade in partnership with Sisi and other "workaday girls" in and outside Nigeria. Agary's text suggests that education, resilience, creativity and hard work are necessary for the emancipation of women from gendered oppression.

Armstrong's novel represents how Indigenous sustainability in a culture of production and consumption can be reinforced and realized through creative economic collaboration



between Indigenous peoples. Environmentally dislocated peoples around the world, including the Okanagan and the Maya represented by Armstrong, are looking beyond the violence of environmental racism and globalization as Devon Peña suggests (Ortiz 23). Rather than despair over the “end of nature,” these people have begun to explore “locally controlled, community-owned, worker-cooperative-type organizations” as sustainable adaptations to the violence of environmental degradation (Ortiz 23). Accordingly, Armstrong portrays Maya coffee farmers collaborating with each other and with other Indigenous groups in relationships based on social and environmental justice, equity and spiritual connectedness.

During Penny’s visit to Mexico her partner David is inspired by discussions on Indigenous economic collaboration that will initiate commercial collaboration amongst Indigenous peoples in Canada, the US, and Mexico. During one meeting, Mayan coffee trade co-op members complain that they are shut out of the market by the Mexican market board and pressured, as a result of hunger and poverty, to sell their lands for oil exploration (176). Proposing a solution, Indigenous-rights activist Emilio proposes an economic cooperation between the Maya and Indigenous commercial co-ops in the US. The green coffee of the Maya would be imported by US Indigenous peoples, and the proceeds from the sales of the coffee shared between both Indigenous groups in “an association based on a spiritual work of mutual fair benefit” (183). Sorflaten describes this association as “[a] transnational solidarity of trade which privileges Indigenous rights and harnesses control of ‘transnational flows and globally dispersed work chains’” (391).

David subsequently establishes a similar cooperative movement among Canadian Indigenous peoples in the spirit of economic collaboration grounded in Indigenous traditions of communality and spirituality. The trade not only “posits an alternative to patriarchal capitalism,”

but it also “provides a model for Indigenous recovery and mediation” (Sorflaten 391). Penny states:

David’s really getting that Indigenous fair trade thing going. He’s setting up a new thing with that group up in the Shuswap. They’re putting an organic heritage-food processing thing together.... He’s been pretty busy setting up the same thing in other communities, too. It’s big and it’s working (279).

Economic collaboration through fair trade encourages creativity and innovation that values health, safety, and equity. Intra-Indigenous trade is a resistance against hazardous industrialized food production prevalent in the global society. This innovative form of resistance encourages increased production, as well as storage and processing technology that will keep Indigenous agriculture sustainable and effective. The Indigenous fair trade market insulates the initiative from the unhealthy competition of the general market.

The combination of economic, social, and cultural cooperation between Indigenous peoples in *Whispering in Shadows* ensures the cultural, spiritual, and economic survival and sustainability of Indigenous peoples. Such cooperation constitutes a formidable and sustainable resistance against the fragmented relations produced by globalization. Dismissal of global economic and cultural models and subsequent re-affirmation of the local, as Sorflaten suggests, “break[s] the illusion of western development and progress as a world order [and sets up] a global/local nexus [which is] a nexus that tracks the space of global disorientation and challenges ‘Western universality as standard, centre, and dominant knowledge’” (391). By the end of *Whispering in Shadows* the collaborative resistance initiated by David is “big” and “working” (279). The text represents effective ways through which Indigenous peoples can resist economic displacement and inscription into the hegemony of globalization.

The traumatization of minority Indigenous groups by social and environmental violence is perpetrated by the impersonal and evasive “monster” of globalization in both *Whispering in Shadows* and in *Yellow-Yellow*. The hegemony of globalization is represented through the contradictions and cooperation between pan-Indigenous and minority groups. In both novels, power and agency are defined and appropriated by the dominant capitalist economic system so that some aspects of the opposition to globalization is re-inscribed by minority peoples to maintain the very systems of violence, cultural dislocation, fragmentation, and sexual exploitation. Globalization, as Peter Christoff and Robyn Eckersley assert, is an impersonal force which, as *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows* both show, imposes social and cultural change through the dominant agency of the law, the press, the military, and the government, as well as through the very agency of minority peoples. Both novels show, however, that Indigenous reconnection to the light of community, family and the land restores both hope and strength for a sustainable future.

## Conclusion

Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* and Jeanette Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows* embody the analogous spiritual, socio-economic and cultural environmentalism of African and Indigenous writing. *Yellow-Yellow* and *Whispering in Shadows* represent the depth of familial interconnection and interdependence between Indigenous peoples and the land. The novels portray, respectively, how the contemporary socio-economic realities of a petro-culture and the wage labour economy in post-colonial Nigerian and North American societies negotiate and slowly affect identity and the destabilization of traditional populations in ways that maintain systems of slow genocide.

In the first chapter, I emphasized the extent of the emotional, spiritual and existential damage of slow violence by exploring the figurative and literal representations of Indigenous environmental knowledge and connections. Agary and Armstrong metaphorically represent how the human body and its functioning interact interdependently with the land and portray how the destruction and pollution of such Indigenous spaces as sacred forests and rivers entails a deep wounding of the Indigenous peoples who are connected to the land. The trope of silence, I argue, is a similar demonstration of the trauma that follows environmental devastation in both novels. Alternative human responses, such as oil pipeline vandalism and prostitution, constitute post-traumatic responses to slow violence by marginalized peoples. I argue that although most Indigenous peoples who engage in these alternative modes of survival see their activities as acts of resistance against the dominant forces of economic and political power that have dispossessed them of their land. Ultimately their alternative survival practices dislocate them from their cultural and social traditions and ethics. Their bodies, including their labour and their resistance, are used for the maintenance of lateral violence, environmental degradation, cultural and

geographic dislocation, all of which reproduce unsustainable lifestyles and exacerbate slow genocide in the Indigenous communities represented in the novels.

My comparative analysis of *Whispering in Shadows* and *Yellow-Yellow* conceptualizes the allegorical imagery of globalization as an invisible and indecipherable monster. Globalization reproduces its violence against populations by manipulating poor racial and ethnic minorities who, in turn, seemingly victimize themselves by participating in the system. Furthermore, in both novels, the power of resistance is represented as indirectly re-inscribing the slow genocidal legacies of globalization. The ambivalence of anti-globalization social agents portray how the hegemony of globalization is grounded in the power of agency, so that intellectual, artistic, and economic agents of anti-globalization undertake struggles within a space of power that is constantly defined and negotiated by globalization. The power of resistance is represented as indirectly re-inscribing the slow genocidal legacies of globalization.

Certainly the slow genocide embodied in colonial systems of marginalization and subjugation of pan-Indigenous and minority Niger Delta groups, as it is represented in Armstrong's and Agary's texts, is maintained in contemporary times through ideological and systemic socio-economic realities that cause ecocide, displacement-without-moving, occupational reorientation and post-traumatic stress disorders in traditional communities. The normalization of traumatic environmental injustice, the widespread adaptations for survival that re-inscribe the violence and injustice of the systems, and the paradox of the agency of resistance reflect systemic ways by which globalization is a "monster" that devours the cultural and economic sustainability and self-determination of marginalized peoples. However, both novels' representations of reconnection to spirituality and to the land suggests that maintenance of pan-indigenous and African traditions and ways of being on traditional land, as well as the

remembrance and re-inscription onto significant practices of communal interdependence and collaboration – the warmth of family, as Armstrong calls it – is the most potent form of resistance against globalization’s all-consuming hegemony.

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